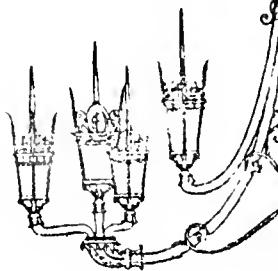


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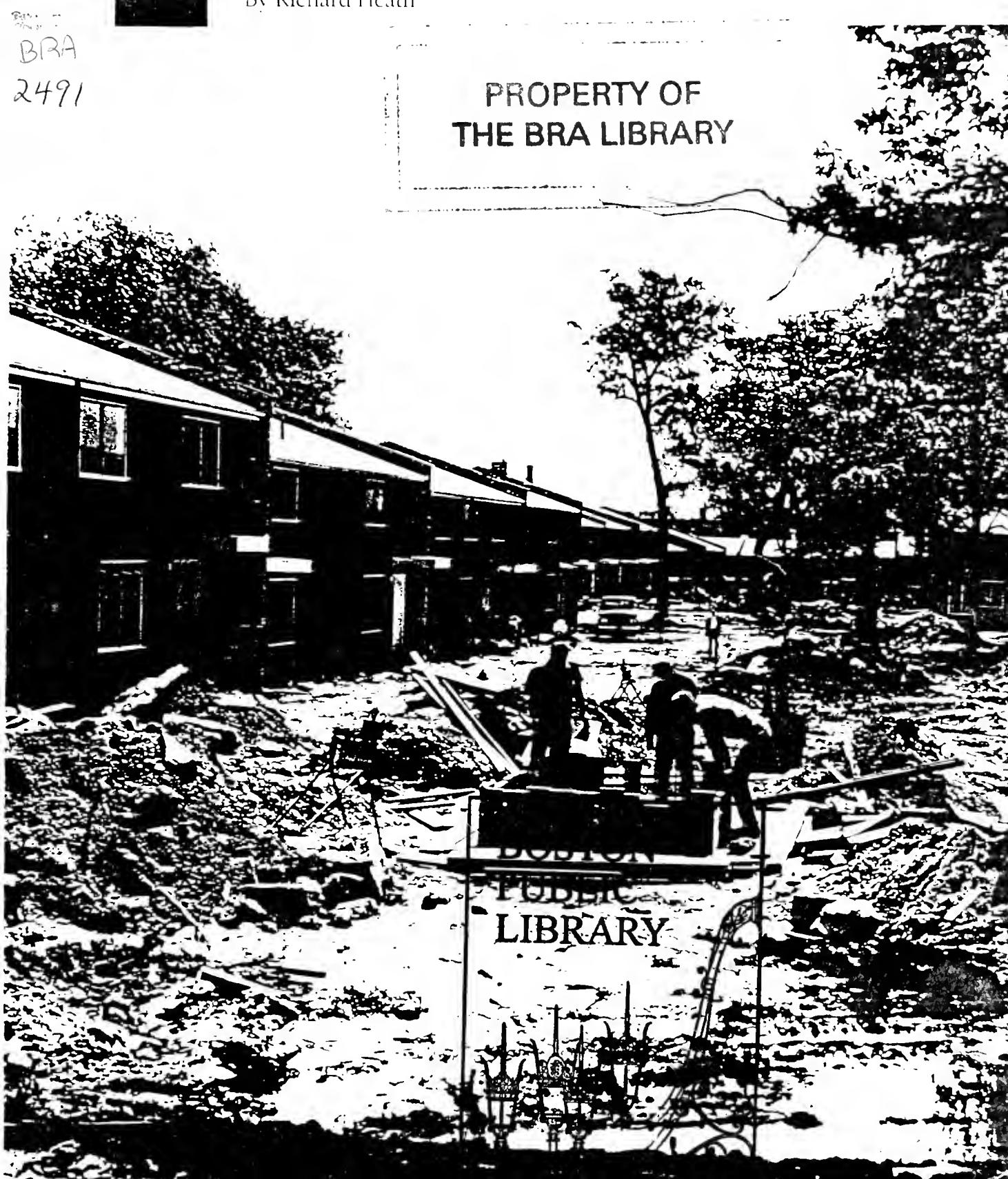
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# AN ACT OF FAITH:

The Building of the Washington Park  
Urban Renewal Area. 1960-1967

By Richard Heath

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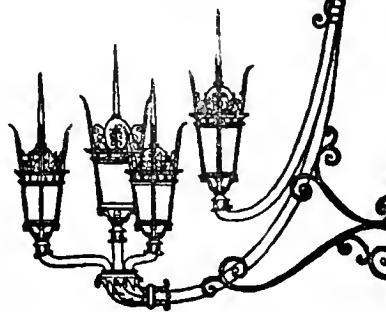


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**AN ACT OF FAITH:**

**THE BUILDING OF THE WASHINGTON**

**PARK URBAN RENEWAL AREA, 1960-1967.**

**BY RICHARD HEATH**

Boston University

Urban Affairs & Planning Dept.

Boston City Seminar



"The process is simple.  
It begins with an act of faith"

Edward J. Logue  
Boston's Workable Program  
for Community Improvement  
Boston Redevelopment Authority, 1962

Faith is the substance of things hoped for,  
the evidence of things not seen.

Hebrews 11:1,2



## PROLOGUE

That summer of 1940, I caught the greyhound bus for Boston with my cardboard suitcase and wearing my green suit.

My half sister Ella met me at the terminal and took me home. The house was in Waumbeck Street in the Sugar Hill section of Roxbury, the Harlem of Boston. I didn't know the world contained as many negroes as I saw thronging downtown Roxbury at night.

I went gawking around the neighborhood—the Waumbeck and Humboldt Avenue section of Roxbury, which is something like Harlem's Sugar Hill, where I'd later live. I saw those Roxbury negroes acting and living differently from any black people I'd ever dreamed of in my life. This was the snooty-black neighborhood; they called themselves the "400" and looked down their noses at the negroes of the black ghetto where Mary, my other half sister, lived.

What I thought I was seeing there in Roxbury was high class, educated, important negroes, living well, working in big jobs and positions. Their quiet homes sat back in their mowed yards. These negroes walked along the sidewalks looking haughty and dignified, on their way to work, to shop, to church. I know now, of course, that what I was really seeing was really seeing was only a big city version of those "successful" negro bootblacks and janitors back in Lansing. Under the pitiful misapprehension that it would make them "better," these Hill negroes were breaking their backs trying to imitate white people.

Malcolm X, a.k.a. Malcolm Little

The Autobiography of Malcolm X, 1964



AN ACT OF FAITH:

THE BUILDING OF THE WASHINGTON PARK URBAN RENEWAL AREA, 1960-1967.

"It is hereby declared to be the policy of the United States to promote the general welfare of the Nation [and] to assist the several states to remedy the unsafe and insanitary housing conditions."

United States Housing Act of 1937

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## INTRODUCTION

Roxbury was formed in 1630 by The Puritans who arrived to erect nothing less than a city of God. Puritan ideology believed that the visible universe was under God's direct and continuous guidance. The Puritan magna charta was the Bible, the law of God from which they took all meaning for their lives and their government. They believed in earnest that they were the chosen of God who had formed a covenant with them to erect a Zion in the wilderness of New England. Their plan was a due form of government both civil and ecclesiastical based upon a covenant between God and themselves.

That government was housed in the visible church and the chosen of that church were only those who demonstrated clearly their covenant of grace with God. Those that could prove that were called Saints. The Saints would lead the people into the new Israel.

The First Church in Roxbury, built on a vast shelf of puddingstone in 1632, was the house not only of the faith of the Puritan but of his state as well. The First Church was the seat of the Holy Commonwealth of Roxbury.

The First Church was erected near where the present church — the fourth building, built in 1804 — is today. The first minister was appointed by Governor John Winthrop on June 5, 1632. He was the Reverend Thomas Weld.

Weld was a staunch Puritan Saint who joined with others to lay the base of Puritan ideology of the theocracy of Massachusetts. Weld also played a prominent role in the trial and banishment of America's first ideological threat, Anne Hutchinson, in 1638.

Rev. Thomas Weld lived in a house on present day Washington Street near the corner of Ziegler where the Patio Lounge once flourished. Next door to him was his colleague John Eliot who became Weld's assistant in November of 1632. Eliot's house was a 2 story wooden building with a gambrel roof that stretched back on a 2 1/2 acre lot from Washington St., where the present day Bank of Boston is, to Winslow Street. Near the back of his

lot, Eliot planted apple trees and Orchard Park may well derive its name from that fact.

Rev. Weld and teacher John Eliot led the First Church together until 1641 when Weld was sent on a political mission to King Charles I. Weld remained in England and never returned to Roxbury. His family flourished; many are buried at the Old Eustis St. Burial ground (such as his brother Captain Joseph). Rev. Weld's direct descendant, William F. Weld, was elected governor of Massachusetts on Nov. 6, 1990.

Eliot would lead the First Church at Roxbury for 58 years during which time his fame would extend beyond the Saints of the Church and the residents of the community. He spent most of his life working with and on behalf of the Massachusetts Indian, converting them to christianity and erecting communities for them to live in peace beyond the reach of the rapacious English. He and his Indian assistants gave them a written language by translating the bible into Algonquinn. Eliot believed that the Indian too could make a covenant with God and thus enter the church and therefore enter Puritan society.

The First Church faced west at the junction of two of the three main roads in Roxbury; Center Street, or the Road to Providence, and Roxbury St. (then Tremont St.) or the Road to Cambridge and Watertown. These roads went past the Church and down the hill to Eliot's house where they joined Dudley Street, or the Road to Plymouth. Together, these three roads were the only land routes to the capital across the neck of land between two marshes. Roxbury was then a very strategically placed town. It was important that it be loyal and ideological correct as well, which it was. Roxbury was a wellspring of Puritanism in the 17th century and very important to Boston's wealth and growth thereafter.

Leading off from Dudley Street was a long, winding interior road called today Walnut Avenue. Walnut Avenue traversed, as it does today, the heart of the community until it joined South Street at Forest Hills. John Eliot owned a thirty acre pasture on Walnut Ave-

nue between Warren St. and Bower St. This land was used for this livestock and to grow the hay and grain to feed them.

Puritanism was a bold and daring experiment in American political life. When John Eliot died at the age of 86 in 1690, he was witnessing its decline as new political forces were growing up based more on materialistic gain than on the creation of an ethical community based on God's law.

Another bold and daring experiment took place nearly three centuries later in Roxbury. A concept whereby government would plan and execute the rebuilding of an entire residential neighborhood. This was called Urban Renewal. Boston's first Neighborhood Urban Renewal Project — and one of the largest urban renewal projects in the United States — was named Washington Park and Walnut Avenue would flow through the heart of it.

The Puritans thought that the Chosen, the Church members, would guide and influence the quality of life within the community. Urban renewal was based on a premise that the quality of the life of a community was threatened by blighted, substandard buildings and outmoded street patterns and that it was the responsibility of government to correct that through a combination of demolition and rehabilitation.

What follows is an attempt to understand the political forces which shaped and built the Washington Park Urban Renewal Area, the string of public laws which made it possible, the people and institutions which planned and executed the project and an assessment of the built community.

This is not an appraisal but a study of a plan from the perspective of an urban planner. The policy and the laws which created that policy or not analyzed or judged. There is a chapter of architectural criticism of the buildings built and how they seem to fit into

the city as a whole. This chapter in no way is a commentary on how the buildings are used or managed.

Urban renewal is a sensitive issue. It affects the way people live today. Roxbury has been studied to death. If that community were given \$5 for every study, report, analysis and plan that some think tank, university or researcher like this one created, it would be the wealthiest town outside of Dover. The residents are not well understood. They deserve to be treated equitably with all Bostonians, which they have not been. This study is an attempt to look at the built environment of the largest renewal project in Boston in the Era of Urban Renewal. We know what Washington Park is; this attempt is to learn how it got there.

The study is an attempt to understand more completely the planning process and to emphasize the difference between planning and policy; development and government. The Boston Redevelopment Authority planned and built the streets of Washington Park. It does not sweep them or fix the pot holes. This study finally is an attempt by the writer to learn more about the community in which he has lived for nearly two decades.

The writer is indebted to two people who helped him gain an insight into the Washington Park Renewal Area and its chronological history. The first is Langley Keyes and his brilliant book *The Rehabilitation Planning Game: A Study in the Diversity of Neighborhood* (M.I.T. Press, 1969). the second is David R. Gergan's unpublished graduate thesis,

*Renewal in the Ghetto: A Study of Residential Rehabilitation in Boston's Washington Park*

(Harvard University Law School, May 24, 1967). I also wish to thank Mr. Bill Wright of the Administrators Office, Boston Housing Authority for providing me with two important documents on public housing and the BHA.

Richard Heath

November 13, 1990

Boston University

Urban Affairs & Planning

Boston City Seminar

MET UA-403

## CHAPTER I

### The Progenitors

It took the catastrophe of the Great Depression, which stalked across America with a vengeance sixty years ago, to bring Americans face to face with the question: was it the proper function of government to provide housing for its people?

The indigent and poor depended on charitable organizations for relief before 1933. Before then, housing the low income worker and his family was not considered very seriously by government. It was considered seriously by the philanthropic community and one of the most successful housing champions for the worker was the wealthy corporate lawyer, Robert Treat Paine (1835-1910). Paine was a descendent of a signer of the Declaration of Independence. He retired from business in the 1870's to devote himself to philanthropy, which included the founding of Associated Charities and the Workingman's Cooperative Bank (active today and at 100 Summer Street).

Paine came upon the contemporary problems of housing in the 1880's in the Lower South End. In 1886 he formed the Philanthropic Housing for Workingmen, a series of cheaply made, brick row houses on Sussex, Warwick, and Greenwich Streets built expressly for the budget of workingmen who desired home ownership. (These row houses still stand as condominiums in a charming little neighborhood off Melnea Cass Blvd.)

In Jamaica Plain, Paine went further. He believed that individual home ownership was one of the basic elements of a satisfactory middle class life. In 1888, he acquired land and planned a middle class community of wooden houses that will bear comparison to blocks in Washington Park.

Paine created the Workingman's Building Association as a wing of his Bank and used that as the central finance and planning agent. George H. Pope was the "house architect" for the Association. He and probably others designed 116 wooden houses in a similar stick built pattern on streets which followed the contours of the land on Edge Hill, Round Hill, Sunnyside, Gay Head and Westerly Streets between Center Street and Heath St., on the edge of the huge factory district of Boston. Using contour street patterns, rather than the usual grid patterns, more building space was allowed and the streets being more private. Paine and his architects deliberately created a suburban cottage style pattern of housing in the popular shingle style of Queen Anne and Colonial Revival Image. Image, because the decoration was restrained in the woodwork and the gables. Still this development a century later is an intact, solid residential community of a scale and style and affordability that was and is obviously in keeping with the housing aspirations of Bostonians. But efforts of philanthropists like Paine alone could not address the growing need in America for affordable, decent housing.

The colossus of Franklin D. Roosevelt has dominated 20th century America. So much that is merely taken as given in American government and life came out of the minds of the men and women driven, inspired and shaped by the will of Franklin Roosevelt. That will was the conviction that the Federal government had to lead the way out of the Great Depression.

Within months of his inauguration, on June 16, 1933, Congress passed and the President signed The National Industrial Recovery Act. A public works program was the main feature of the N.I.R.A. and The Public Works Administration under Secretary of the Interior, Harold Ickes was formed. The novel concept of the public ownership of housing was pushed by the National Public Housing Conference and the National Conference of Catholic Charities which successfully advocated for a slum clearance and low-rent housing provision within the N.I.R.A. statute of the legislation. Under Section 202(D) the Housing division was created to stimulate jobs and provide new housing in three ways.

1. Lend money to limited dividend corporation to finance slum clearance or rehabilitation of low rent housing.
2. Make grants and loans to public bodies for the same purpose;
3. Buy, condemn, sell or lease property in the new projects itself.

In the absence of state enabling authorities, the Housing Division of the PWA cleared the worst slums and replaced them with 50 low rent developments for 22,000 families in 30 cities across the country. These were the first government subsidized housing developments in American history; the dress rehearsal for Urban Renewal.

Boston was slow to establish the municipal corporation necessary to receive federal funds for slum removal and new housing. Part of the reason was the historical conflict between city and state government, but it was mostly due to a resistance to change and a fear of big government. Nevertheless, Mayor James Michael Curley was quick to see what his predecessors reaped thirty and forty years later: That federal money meant power, popularity and patronage. And also the opportunity to capture votes in the wards of weakest support.

Curley's shopping list for public works money, for example, went in large measure to South Boston, which was never a high voting ward for Curley.

On October 1, 1935 the Boston Housing Authority was established by law with the power necessary to be entitled for 202(D) Housing Division funds. It is not surprising that the first public housing development in Boston was built in South Boston on largely vacant land looking across Pleasure Bay to the Atlantic Ocean. Curley was Governor of Massachusetts and the site was in

the district of Curley's ally, Congressman John McCormack. Originally called old Harbor Village, it is now known as Mary Ellen McCormick Houses. It was opened on May 1, 1938.

(In an act that would have an ironic conclusion, Ward 12 in Roxbury, in a non binding referendum question in 1938, rejected low income housing. Ward 12 is the seat of Washington Park Urban Renewal.)

Housing advocates wanted a locally administered program with the key word being administration of publicly owned housing. In 1935, Senator Robert F. Wagner of New York introduced the first public housing bill before Congress. It called for the establishment of a permanent federal housing agency, with the construction and administration of housing to be carried out by local authorities. After two years of unsuccessful effort, Wagner gained the support of Congressman Henry B. Steagall of Alabama.

President Roosevelt himself convinced Steagall (an erstwhile opponent of the bill) to change his mind. Amidst shrill charges by private interests that the bill was "pure socialism", it passed the House and was signed by the President on September 1, 1937. The United States Housing Act was law. The Federal Housing Authority now replaced the Public Works Administration Housing Division. The pioneering efforts of philanthropists like Paine to eliminate slums and provide decent housing for the low income resident was now a permanent national program.

The major accomplishments of the 1937 Act have bearing on the Washington Park Urban Renewal legislation; these points were historic milestones in the formation of public policy housing.

1. Establishment of the first permanent federal agency for low rent, subsidized housing in America.
2. Established federal loans to local housing authorities in the form of bonds for terms up to 60 years to enable the local authorities to borrow up to \$90 of the cost of the approved projects.
3. Establishment of slum clearance as a public function.
4. Annual Federal subsidies for housing the low income resident.
5. The policy of local tax exemption for subsidizing the low income family.
6. Establishment of the principles of local responsibility for planning, building and arranging federally subsidized housing.

The emphasis of the bill was in slum clearance for new housing. \$800 million was authorized in loans to local housing authorities.

The original members of the Boston Housing Authority (BHA) were John A. Breen, chairman, Rev. Thomas R. Reynolds, Bradbury F. Cushing, John Carroll and Harold F. Kellogg.

The first five public housing projects built under the 1937 Act in Boston were located in Charlestown, South Boston, and Roxbury—all working class communities.

The fifth and last before the outbreak of World War II is also of great interest to the study of the Washington Park Urban Renewal Area because it was built on the edge of the future area, at the corner of Dudley Street and Harrison Avenue opposite the elevated train terminal.

This was Orchard Park. Orchard Park was (and still is) a city park in the midst of thickly built blocks of wooden houses, tenements and rooming houses on the line between residential Roxbury and the factory district. This park-like Washington Park a generation later—took on the name of an entire district when B.H.A. Chairman John Breen announced the creation of a new public housing development on September 12, 1940. The project was 15.72 acres divided into two sections separated by Albany Street: the first section between Harrison Avenue, Eustis Street and Ziegler and the second bounded roughly by Eustis, Hampden, Albany and Prescott streets. The proposed new cross town highway was the boundary to the east; in fact the line of this road was moved by the City Planning Board to form "a splendid boundary for the project." (Review of the Activities of the Boston Housing Authority: 1936-1940).

There were several criteria for selecting the community around Orchard Park.

1. The site was within the budget of \$1.50 a square foot (or about \$995,000 for the land).
2. The area was blighted economically and the great majority of the structures were substandard. Many of the 2-3 family wooden tenements were near the point of collapse.
3. Street arrangement made it possible to close streets to create megablocks and eliminate through traffic.
4. Proximity to public transportation.

Several of these same criteria would be used to justify Washington Park Urban Renewal.

The building permit for the first building at 1106 to 1116 Harrison Avenue between Dudley and Eustis Street was issued on March 7, 1941. John A. McPherson with John M. Gray Company (175 High Street) was the architect.

M.S. Kelleher was the general contractor. He urged to push construction at the fullest possible speed.

Relocation of the hundreds of families from their homes in the Orchard Park project area was a delicate task and one that would confront the planners of Washington Park in a much bigger way. An office of the B.H.A. was opened near Orchard Park to assist any and all the affected residents in finding new homes. Field workers

from the authority often went out to locate appropriate apartments for the displaced resident or family.

Orchard Park was completed and ready for occupancy on November 1, 1942. By December 10th, 303 families had moved in to the 773 unit development. The first manager was James W. Claflin, born and raised in Roxbury's Fort Hill section. Interestingly, only 93 of these families were originally from the area. The majority were defense workers from out of state.

The Orchard Park Development has similarities with the Washington Park Urban Renewal Area in ways which will be described at length later. It is appropriate here to take a walk around the development to see how Orchard Park was built.

First, the housing blocks are placed as three story brick rectangular boxes parallel to each other and perpendicular to the street. There are no interior streets—just vast paved empty spaces. The development is built on two huge megablocks, one roughly triangular from Albany to Harrison Avenue and the other a much larger rectangle that stretches from Albany to Hampden Streets. In this larger segment are the huge brick Dearborn School (now closed) and the green square of Orchard Park.

As will be seen at Washington Park, the public housing development at Orchard Park has no relationship to its surrounding community: not in the architectural style or in the street layout. Most of the buildings do not face the public street. The few that

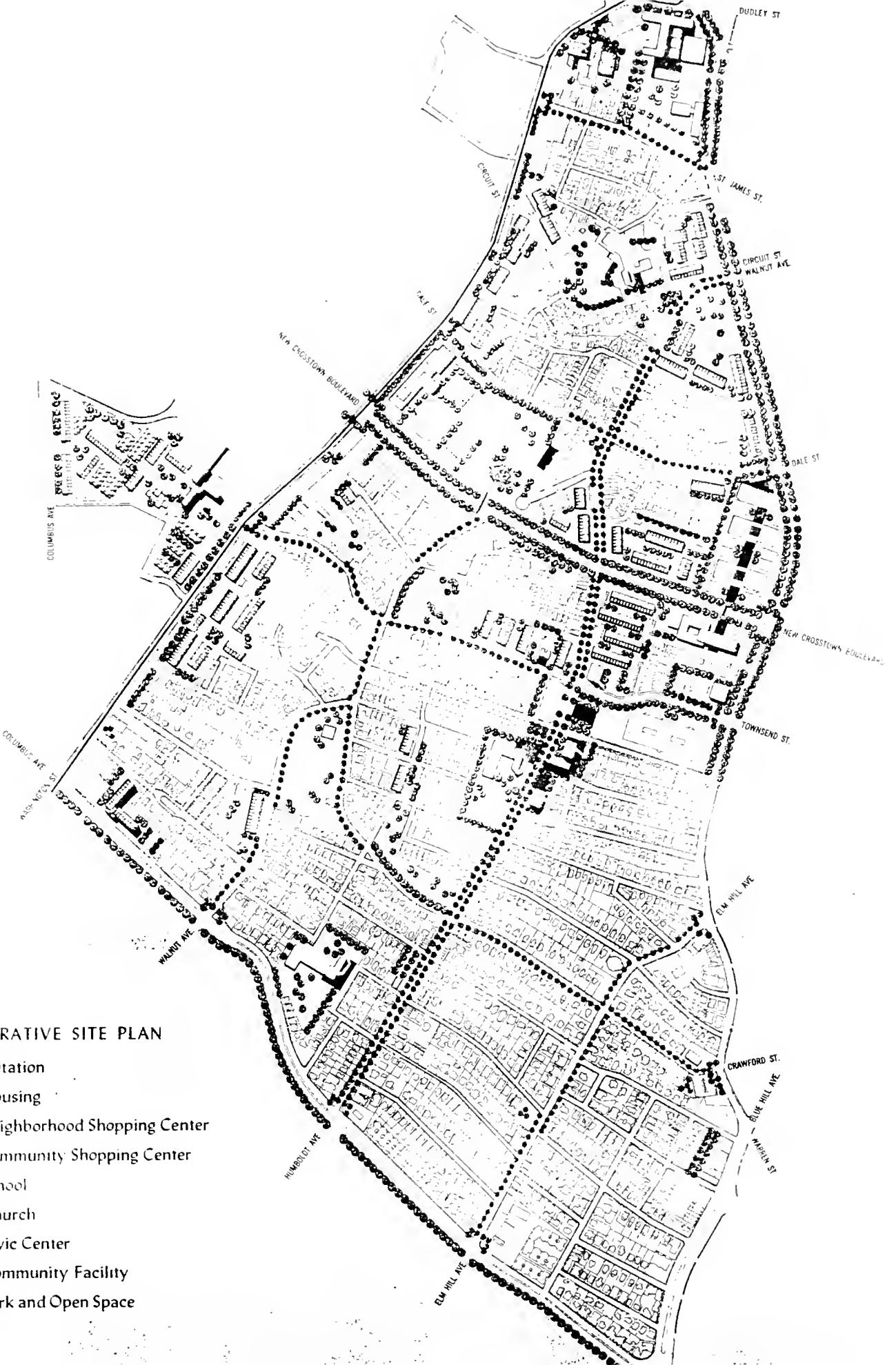
do-such as at the 1100 block on Harrison Avenue-form walls that shield the housing which parallels it in back. At Orchard Park is seen for the first time the phenomenon of an architectural style which can be termed the Paranoid style, or the Architecture of Control.

The large open paved spaces between the brick blocks make for ease of patrol by police. There are no alleys of blind corners. The roofs are flat and the buildings spaced far apart. The megablocks are their own spaces within the larger community. It is obviously different and therefore easier to isolate.

No more is this evident than the placement of the doors to the apartment blocks. The doors are all at corner angles of the buildings. None are in the middle of a block, flush to the facade of the public street. People do not walk into their apartment building so much as they are funnelled into it. The flanking walls of the building on either side of the door as a person exits become the architecture of control: that resident is forced to go straight out into a small plaza area that can be—if need be—quickly and easily sealed. The doors themselves are no wider or taller than the doors to an individual apartment. In short, these are not welcoming entrances as a front door should be. But rather, they set apart the resident as someone who is potentially a problem. The architecture predicts that problem and plans for its solution. The monotony of the spacial plan relationships of the buildings is

a deliberate plan to create a predictable space if the authorities have to act.

This is architectural criticism, however. What is most important about Orchard Park is that affordable housing for the people who need it was established by national policy.



## ILLUSTRATIVE SITE PLAN

Rehabilitation

New Housing

New Neighborhood Shopping Center

New Community Shopping Center

New School

New Church

New Civic Center

New Community Facility

New Park and Open Space



## CHAPTER TWO

### From Redevelopment to Renewal

#### I.

The basic Federal Urban Renewal Statute which made possible the creation of the Washington Park Urban Renewal Area is Title I of the Housing Act of 1949.

Senator Robert A. Taft of Ohio first proposed a strengthened and enlarged public housing bill to solve the growing problem of inadequate and substandard housing. Private investment simply was not going into housing for the low and moderate income residents. Together with Senators Wagner of New York and Ellender of Louisiana, Taft filed bill S.1342 on August 1, 1945. This triggered four years of extensive debate and repeated rejection by forces opposed to public housing. The election of 1948 with the selection of Harry S. Truman as President demonstrated the electorate's acceptance of the innovations of the New Deal. A new a major housing bill was filed on Jan. 6, 1949 by Taft, Wagner and Ellender. This time they were successful, and President Truman signed the Taft-Wagner-Ellender Housing Act on July 5, 1949.

The bill passed because it was not entirely a public housing bill. It included something new: to placate the foes of public housing, urban redevelopment was given a strong role of private enterprise. Title I of the Housing Act authorized financial assistance by the Housing and Home Finance Administrator to a local

public agency for a project consisting of the assembly, clearance, site preparation and either the sale or lease of land at its fair market value for uses specified in a redevelopment plan.

The emphasis was on an accepted overall plan with broad conditions and criteria. The purposes could be for many things a benefit to the city as a whole: luxury housing to attract taxpaying residents, low income housing to alleviate blight, commercial and industrial uses for job creation or public parks for the enjoyment of all.

The landmark 1937 Housing act demonstrated that one function of government was to provide for the housing of its people. Title I of the 1949 Housing Act declared that a national objective was also the redevelopment of blighted areas.

## II.

In 1913, the city of Boston Planning Board was authorized by the State Legislature (Chapter 41 Mass. General Laws). But the real impetus for general planning for the city came out of the forces within the National Housing Act of 1949.

Mayor James M. Curley—then in his last hurrah as the city's chief executive—directed the City Planning Board in the summer of 1949 to draft up a program of slum clearance to be presented to the next Congress. Curley would be certain that Boston would be standing first in line even before the store opened to get at the

wealth that lay behind the Housing Act. There was a two fold planning program:

1. Designation of Redevelopment Areas
2. Preparation of preliminary plans for rebuilding after demolition and clearance.

In the study of the proposed redevelopment areas, the Planning Board was guided by the provisions of Title I which read that land must be in a deteriorated, predominately residential area. The term deterioration was defined at the local level, but standards used in Baltimore and Providence were good examples. These included: in need of major repairs, no private bath, overcrowding of units, high density of population, high incidents of fire, and high rates of tuberculosis.

Boston was eligible for a 40-year loan in a ratio of \$2 federal match to every \$1 of city money committed to the redevelopment area. The local grant could be in cash or in donations at cash value of land, demolition, removal or site improvements.

The planning of the Washington Park Urban Renewal Area eleven years later would follow these same criteria.

The City Planning Board designated 43 residential areas as redevelopment zones. these were scattered in lower Roxbury, the South End, South Boston, the West End, North End, the heart of

Charlestown and East Boston. Nearly all of the South End was proposed as a redevelopment area.

From the designations, a General Plan for Boston was begun in April 1950 and submitted to Mayor John B. Hynes on September 20, 1951. Creation of a plan for Boston's redevelopment answered the requirement of the Housing Act for a long term development plan.

In October 1952, the Urban Redevelopment Division of the Boston Housing Authority proposed a slum clearance project for Roxbury that is within the area of Dudley terminal and present day Madison Park Village, that is from Shawmut Avenue to Hampden Street. Money was allocated by the City Council to study this area and the so-called "New York Streets" of the South End (between Washington Street, Herald Street and Albany Street. The Herald plant sits on a good portion of that renewal area.).

On October 25, 1955, Mayor Hynes sent to the Federal Housing Administration a Workable Program for the first two development projects in Boston: the 48 acre West End and the 14 acre New York streets area of the South End. In April 1956, the plan was approved and at a ceremony at the Sheraton Plaza Hotel, Federal Housing Administrator Albert M. Cole presented a check for \$1,474,600 to Mayor Hynes to begin the New York streets renewal area.

Renewal for the residential blocks of the New York streets and the next year for the West End still meant the bulldozer. It was

disruptive to the community feeling of a home and a community, it was heart wrenching and it contributed to a feeling of restlessness and alienation among both the victims of the project and the surrounding neighborhoods.

In December 1953, President Dwight Eisenhower received a report he authorized from the 21-person housing advisory committee. It advised basic change from the slum clearance of urban redevelopment to Urban Renewal, a mix of clearance and rehabilitation. The subsequent Housing Act of 1954, which Eisenhower signed on August 2, 1954, broadened the provisions of Title I of 1949 to include urban renewal: the rehabilitation of houses, the construction of new houses to replace blight, and the conservation of neighborhoods. Federal grants were authorized to cities to revise their housing codes and funds were provided to guarantee bank loans for rehabilitation.

To be eligible for funds from the Housing Act of 1954, the city had to demonstrate its commitment by preparing a "Workable Program." The first Workable Program in Boston of urban renewal as described in the Housing Act of 1954 was the Washington Park Urban Renewal Area. That would be written in June of 1962.

Prior to 1957, the Boston Housing Authority was the only public agency that had the responsibility of carrying out both public housing and redevelopment functions. In August of 1957, Mayor John B. Hynes established the Boston Redevelopment Authority,

as the agency empowered to carry out urban renewal plans. It was approved by the State on October 4, 1957 (Chapt. 150, Acts of 1957).

Mayor Hynes appointed Joseph W. Lynch, chairman to serve with Monsignor Francis J. Lally, James G. Colbert and Stephen E. McCloskey. In 1958, the City Planning board approved a pilot program of urban renewal on a 186 acre tract in what was called middle Roxbury, between Dudley and Townsend streets and flanked by Washington and Warren Streets. The first person to work on what would become Boston's largest and its first residential urban renewal area was a planner with the young B.R.A. named Lloyd Sinclair. He began with the Boston Planning Board in the early 1950's moved over to the B.R.A. and finally bridged the fateful gap between Mayor Hynes and his successor Mayor John F. Collins until 1961.

Such public officials with memories and experiences of the past and long nurtured contacts with city agency colleagues and neighborhood residents cannot be under estimated. Indeed, it can be said that because Sinclair worked throughout both the initial planning stages and the beginning application process (in itself a two year effort) the Washington Park Urban Renewal Area sprang off the drawing boards and into the ground.

Sinclair worked on the Washington Park preliminary report which he presented to the Urban Renewal Coordinating Committee on

Jan. 8, 1959 (founded by Mayor Hynes in July 1956, The Committee included the Building Commission, Public Works Commission, Coordinator of Rehabilitation, the Director of Demolition, The Planning Board Chairman, the B.H.A. Chairman, the City Corporation Counsel, and the Commission of Health).

On March 2, 1959, the Mayor submitted a planning application grant to the Federal Housing Administration for the Roxbury Renewal Project, the 186 acre site between Dudley and Warren streets.

At the City Council hearings on the Roxbury Renewal plan, the B.R.A. chairman stated that "The Washington Park Renewal Area is the most logical starting point for rehabilitation action in the city's "roll back the blight" campaign. The proposed renewal area was selected for its rehabilitation potential.

The Washington Park area is centrally located in one of the principal residential sections of the city." (City Council proceedings, March 2, 1959).

In April 1959, the City Council held two public hearings on the New Washington Park renewal plan at Roxbury Memorial High School. There was no opposition among a estimated 1000 residents who came to the hearing. The planning and survey grants were unanimously approved by the City Council and the applications were sent on to Washington, D.C. where they were approved on December 15, 1960.

The legislative and financial bricks and steel and cement were being stockpiled to create the Washington Park Urban Renewal Area. Beginning in 1937 when housing became national public policy through the 1949 and 1954 Housing Acts, the staging was being set up for a grand-renewal of Roxbury around Washington Park.

As the fabulous fifties drew to a close, and with it the administration of Mayor John B. Hynes, other building blocks were being assembled. These were more durable, created from the very land of Roxbury. They were the residents. Community participation would build the Washington Park Renewal Area as much as any piece of legislation.

Ever since the passage of the 1954 Housing Act, many of the leaders of Roxbury—both white and black—who shared the concept of Roxbury as a prosperous middle class community, tried to use the program to deal with the area's increasing problems. These long time residents saw renewal as nothing less as the engine to halt the spread of blight and the problems associated with poverty. Beginning in 1949 with Freedom House and in 1954 with the Roxbury Community Council, the residents of Roxbury started to get organized around the effort to preserve their community—and their way of life.

A unique partnership would be formed between city government and the community which had never been established before in Boston.

## CHAPTER THREE

### The Planning of the Washington Park Renewal Area

The Washington Park Renewal Area plan was launched thirty years ago on September 24, 1960. At the same time a New Community was born by the power of the planner's pen. Heretofore Washington Park was a ten acre park fronting on Dale Street and adjacent to the Lewis School. Long known as Honeysuckle Hill for the shrubs on the rocky slope along Paulding Street, it was blocked from its namesake street by a row of wooden 2 and 3 family houses.

For over two centuries, Washington Park was just a nameless residential area south of the business district. The triangle of the Washington Park Renewal Area began at the business district and was confined by Washington Street and Warren Street before ending at Seaven Street and the tree-lined hills of Franklin Park. Within that triangle were two communities: one, called Middle Roxbury lay between the business district and Townsend Street. The houses there were older, more compact and built on narrower streets. It was the home of the blue collar workers, the unskilled working poor and the recent immigrant who found the low rents and easily accessible apartments convenient. Fine homes dotted Walnut Avenue and the stone Gothic Walnut Congregational Church stood proudly on the corner of Dale Street within sight of Washington Park as it had since 1888.

A transition appeared at Townsend street along the district's other open spot, the wonderfully rocky 2 1/4 acre Horatio Harris Park. From here and stretching southward to Franklin Park were the high shouldered stately homes on dignified tree lined streets of the professional and middle class home owners. Humboldt Avenue was their boulevard. Here also stood well appointed apartment blocks for the upper income apartment dweller which faced over Franklin Park on Seaver Street.

If there is a correlation between income and lifestyle and of the difference in expectations and aspirations of the worker and the professional, the Washington Park Renewal area was the place to observe it in 1960. Middle Roxbury was overwhelmed by low income families ( in 1960 that meant below \$3,000 per year). Upper Roxbury was a prestige area for professionals and middle class managers who had found their place in the American dream. In 1960, Washington Park was in the midst of social and economic change, the type of demographic shift which Roxbury had been witness to for two centuries.

For a half century, but mostly since the 1930's, Upper Roxbury in particular had been the prestige area to live in for long established Boston Blacks. As one B.R.A. planner put it in March 1966, "There are more Black brains between Seaver and Townsend Street than anywhere else in Massachusetts". A fact that is true today, twenty five years later. They had been moving into the area

from the South End between 1915 and 1933, Many in 1960 had lived in the area since the 1930's and made up the Black equivalent of Boston Brahmins. It was a fact of tremendous importance for the renewal of Washington Park that the Black elite not only lived there but welcomed the planned rebuilding of the area.

The previous ethnic majority was Boston's Jewish community. In 1960 30% of the population in Washington Park were white and of that number, the overwhelming majority - 80% - were Jewish. They lived chiefly along Seaver Street and Elm Hill Avenue. As early as 1898, Jews were a presence in Washington Park. In that year the Young Men's Hebrew Association was built opposite Franklin Park at Humboldt Avenue. This served the needs of newly immigrant Jewish families.

In the decades after the first World War, the Jews of Boston came to dominate Washington Park. Jews soon owned most of the property and most of what they owned they built themselves using Jewish architects, developers and managers. The grand apartment blocks along Seaver Street from Humboldt to Maple were built in the 1920's in this way. These solid medium to high rent apartments housed Jews who walked to temple or Hebrew School within the community. Congregation Beth Hamidrash Hagadol stood on Crawford Street near Humboldt Avenue. On Warren Street stood Beth Hamidrash Aperion (which today is the Skycap Plaza). Behind Beth Hamidrash stood the famed Maimonides Educational Institution at 22 Elm Hill

Avenue, founded in 1939 by the brilliant Polish Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, the Chief Rabbi of Boston. The majestic Temple Mishkan Tefila on Seaver Street is the grandest synagogue in Upper Roxbury and second to Jeshurun Israel on Blue Hill Avenue and Brunswick Street as the largest Jewish congregation in Boston. Temple Mishkan Tefila was designed by Charles Greco along Roman lines. When it was completed on May 21, 1929 it announced proudly the arrival of the Jews.

These two long established groups joined the Irish Catholics who lived along Washington Street and around Washington Park. These were mostly working class families, although not a few were substantial middle class home owners.

All three confronted the gradual and increasing influx of lower income blacks, chiefly from the South who crowded into the lower rent districts south of Cambridge Street, around St. Joseph's Church and in the crowded narrow street between Warren and Walnut Avenue. Housing was deteriorating fast as the owners simply stopped investing in their properties. The other change was the movement of whites - largely Jewish, but just as often Irish - to the sunnier southern part of Jamaica Plain and West Roxbury as well as to the suburban ring towns of Randolph, Canton, Brookline and beyond to Framingham.

Clear evidence of this change was the movement of Jewish institutions. Temple Mishkan Tefila moved to a new house on

Hammond Pond Parkway in 1958, the Maimondides School moved to a campus on Route 9 in Brookline in 1962, and the YMHA on Seaver Street was sold to a Black 7th Day Adventist Church the same year. The only Center of Jewish life by the mid-1960's was Hecht House opposite Franklin Park on American Legion Highway (which today is the Lena Park Community Center).

So rapid were these movements that by 1960 71% of Washington Park was black in a city whose entire black population was just under 10% (today Boston's black community is 25% of the population). This shift took place in only ten years. In addition, the population had dropped to 25,000, 20% less than in 1950. Of that number, 30% lived below the 1960 poverty level of \$3,000 a year.

To the middle classes of both black and white communities, these changes were becoming intolerable. Over 25% of the housing stock was inadequate and unsafe. Fires were becoming too frequent. Absentee owners of multi family dwellings were using them for profit only to house the newly arrived southern or Caribbean immigrants. The financial signals of blight were also flashing in Roxbury; underwriters would not issue fire insurance and banks refused mortgages.

The influx of large numbers of low income most southern blacks and the concomitant flight of whites- mostly Jews to the western part of Boston and the suburbs was threatening the quality of life

in Washington Park. To the black elite who had worked hard to achieve middle income status in a nation where that was not easy to accomplish for Blacks, this was a greater threat, because racial barriers in other parts of Boston and the suburbs meant that they literally could not leave and resume their middle class lifestyle elsewhere. Roxbury was their life and their future.

For the long term resident of Washington Park, urban renewal was seen as the last chance to halt the exodus of the respectable residents both white and black and to restore the neighborhood as a fine residential community.

When in 1958, the Hynes administration finally began to promote urban renewal for Washington Park, the black middle class saw this as the only way to save their neighborhood from complete physical decay.

At the City Council hearing of 1959, the B.R.A. spokesman declared that "Washington Park is one of the most rapidly declining areas of Boston and one which needs immediate and prompt attention" (Proceedings of the City Council, March 2, 1959).

Washington Park urban renewal was to be the vanguard to stabilize Roxbury. In the words of Langley Keyes in his brilliant essay on Washington Park written in his 1967 book The Rehabilitation Planning Game, the rehabilitation area was defined by a strategy against physical decay.

Washington Park would be the effort to "prevent blight from creeping out to Boston neighborhoods beyond Roxbury. Blight was viewed as a marching conquering array and Roxbury was where the defenders of the city were to take a stand."

The question not asked was whether Roxbury - the heart of Black Boston - had the strength and the socio-economic capacity to endure this last stand.

## II.

The leaders which emerged to lead the defense against blight in Roxbury were Otto and Muriel Snowden and their organization Freedom House.

Freedom House was founded in February of 1949, by the Snowdens in a direct response to the many signs of blight that were becoming increasingly evident all around them: dirty streets, neglected housing, petty crime and vandalism. Born in 1916 in Orange, New Jersey, Muriel Snowden was a graduate of Radcliffe. She would become the most articulate leader in Roxbury on the revitalization of the Washington Park area. Out of the 17 residents who joined the Snowdens that night a charitable non profit agency was created that was incorporated on January 25, 1950. The boundaries in which this new civic association would work were almost exactly those that became the lines of the Washington park Urban Renewal Area. The goals were two- conserving and improving the Upper Roxbury neighborhood, and providing opportunities for greater interracial

contact and understanding within the community itself. Freedom House began in a small office over the Humboldt Theater at 151 Humboldt Avenue at the corner of Waumbeck Street. (Today that site is the playground of the Trotter School). Opposite the theater was a small church which Saul Moffie had designed for the Pleasant Hill Baptists in October, 1941. It replaced a two story wooden house built in 1893 by the real estate speculator Cheever Newhall. The emergence of this small, neat Baptist Church sitting high up on a tall foundation signalled the arrival of the black community who had the faith in themselves and in their new community to invest in property and erect their own church. Black church leaders would become an important part of the constituency building for Washington Park Renewal Area.

In June of 1952 with a \$15,000 down payment raised from the Boston business and philanthropic communities, Freedom House moved into a former Hebrew Teachers College at 14 Crawford Street just outside the Grove Hall section of Roxbury where the Snowden's lived. The Teachers College was built in 1923 as an addition to an existing Baptist Church. For the third time in its life, 14 Crawford Street would host successive generations of Roxbury ethnic groups. Throughout the 1950's, Freedom House pounded the message home to home owners, concerned residents of means, and professional people to take over their own communities. Rather than run away to the suburbs or West Roxbury, stay and attack the deterioration.

The method for the attack was the creation of neighborhood block associations under the umbrella of Freedom House. This was first done by Freedom House Board Members organizing their own streets. The Dale Street Block Association was formed in 1957 to fight the renewal of a liquor license for a disreputable cafe. By 1959, 27 block associations were formed. With the financial support of a \$20,000 two year grant from the Emil Schwartzhaupt Foundation in 1958, Freedom House was able to staff and coordinate the block associations and to begin to establish contact with Boston's public agencies that would focus sustained attention on Roxbury for the first time.

It was the Freedom House Umbrella Organization of block groups with their lines of communication and the staff to run the day to day operations that got out the people for the April 15, 1959 City Council hearing on the proposed Washington Park Urban Renewal Area. The Urban Renewal of the Washington Park area came about because of strong community action. A strong leadership group within Roxbury sought out and promoted urban renewal for their community. This was far different form the West End experience. In that section of Boston between present day Government Center and North Station, urban renewal ran roughshod over a resistant community. The West End quickly became synonymous with the worst of urban redevelopment. In Roxbury, the Black elite and their white allies thought that urban renewal would be far different than the West End

because there was the means through the Freedom House Block Associations of creating a working relationship between the neighbors and the city's planners. This was to be called "planning with people" and the man who invented that phrase was a Roxbury boy named John F. Collins.

### III.

John F. Collins was elected mayor of Boston in November 1959. During his two terms in office, he would undertake the planning and execution of the Washington Park Urban Renewal Area. The lengthened shadow of John Collins falls across all that was created anew in the Washington Park community.

John Collins was born in the Washington Park Renewal Area- then simply called Ward 12 in Roxbury- on July 20, 1919. His father was a chauffeur and they lived in his grandfather's house at 10 Elmore Street, a few blocks south of Washington park and within sight and sound of the elevated railway that strode over Washington Street. Elmore Street connects Washington Street with Walnut Avenue at Horatio Harris Park. Opposite Horatio Harris Park is a large white building called Elm Hill Nursing Home at the corner of Townsend Street. Collins was born there when it was Elm Hill Hospital. He was the oldest of three sons and St. Joseph's Church, just down the street on the other side of Washington Park, was their parish church. He graduated from Roxbury Memorial High School in 1936, a school which he watched being built as a

youngster. It was completed in 1928 from the designs of the architect Harrison A. Atwood. An enormous gothic revival brick building, it covers nearly an entire city block between Townsend and Deckard Streets on Warren Street. Today it is being converted into the new home of the Boston Latin School. As Mayor, Collins would have occasion to return to his old high school for public hearings on the plans for the renewal of Washington Park. After graduating from Suffolk Law School after five years of night classes in 1941, Collins set out on a career in Boston politics. In 1941, he ran for a seat on the City Council but was unsuccessful. After serving in the army during World War II, he returned to Elmore Street and promptly announced his candidacy for State Representative from Ward 12 on April 4, 1946. In 1947 he married Mary Cuniff at St. Joseph's Church. The former Miss Cuniff was also from Roxbury. In 1951 he successfully ran for the State Senate.

A handsome young attorney who lived at 25 Crawford Street saw the opportunity and ran for the vacant Ward 12 seat in the House. This was a transplanted Washingtonian named Edward W. Brooke. That a Black resident of Upper Roxbury ran for the seat of an Irish Bostonian born and raised in Middle Roxbury was symbolic of the changes swirling through that community in the 1950's.

In 1955 Collins tried for the City Council again. During his campaign, first three of his children and then himself contacted

polio during the epidemic that swept across the state that year. Undaunted, he campaigned in a wheelchair with his devoted wife Mary doing much of the street campaigning for him. He won his city council seat.

In 1959, Collins decided to run for Mayor. His opponent was the powerful Senate President John E. Powers. Urban Renewal and what Collins called "The New Boston" would be the issue on which the decidedly underdog challenger would stake his political future. The image of Boston as a corrupt old city run by bosses such as John Powers was a theme Collins used to his advantage. IN one of Boston's most exciting upset victories, Collins beat Powers by 24,000 votes. In all the wards of Roxbury and Jamaica Plain, Collins beat Powers by a 6,242 vote margin. Political analysts at the time felt that Collins owed his victory to the influences of the Italian vote - a relatively new voting bloc in Boston. Powers animosity as Senate President towards Governor Foster Furcolo, the first Italian-American governor in the history of Massachusetts, upset the Italian-American voters.

Among the black middle class leaders form Ward 12 who supported collins and therefore influenced the large black vote for the candidate was Edward Brooke, Melnea Cass, the President of NAACP; and Boston Housing Authority Board Member Victor C. Bynoe.

IV.

The electorate saw in John Collins the one effective leader who could halt Boston's decline. The decade of the 1950's, for example, saw the city lose 14,000 jobs, 100,000 people and \$78 million in taxable assets from the downtown business district alone. The median family income was the lowest in 7 major cities. Business and civic leaders had withdrawn to the suburbs.

Mayor-elect John Collins wasted little time in grasping the one force which he knew could save Boston from further decline: Federally funded urban renewal tentatively begun under Mayor Hynes. He moved quickly to insure the participation federal and state government in the nascent Government Center. In order to coordinate this and the renewal plan for Roxbury, which had been approved by the City Council, Collins turned to Edward J. Logue, Redevelopment Administrator of New Haven, Connecticut.

A graduate of Yale Law School, from which he graduated after service in the Air Force in Italy during World War II, Logue began his career as a Philadelphia labor lawyer in 1948. In 1953 he opened a law practice in New Haven, Connecticut after working as the legal advisor to Connecticut Governor Chester Bowles. Soon after, Logue worked on the mayoral campaign of Richard Lee, who emphasized in his speeches the importance of changing the condition of New Haven. When he was elected mayor, Lee put New Haven in the forefront of American's cities by using the full wight of the Housing Act of 1949 and the 1954 Eisenhower legislation, which

stressed private investment, to change the face of New Haven. He pushed redevelopment and renewal to the center of political focus in New Haven and kept it there. It was Edward Logue, appointed in February of 1955 as Administrator of Redevelopment, who developed the proposals which became the policy of Lee's administrations. Logue was soon Lee's right hand man.

Collins gave redevelopment the same top billing in Boston as Lee had done in New Haven. When Logue arrived in Boston early in 1960, the Mayor asked him to draw up a comprehensive plan for the renewal of Boston.

Nine months later on September 24, 1960, Logue and Mayor Collins unveiled their \$90 million development program for Boston before the City Council. The program was a marked shift away from clearance towards renewal and rehabilitation aimed at preserving the entire neighborhood. Collins believed that a federally funded urban renewal program- broadly conceived and vigorously administered- was the way Boston could cope with all its major areas of slum and blight. Logue's plan included the downtown area (Old Scollay Square), the Back Bay (the proposed Prudential Center on the old railway yards) and seven city neighborhoods including Charlestown, Allston-Brighton, the Fenway, the South End, and Roxbury. This responded to Collins' mandate for a broadly conceived plan. The 'vigorously administered' part demanded radical change in government. Logue wanted the Planning Board

abolished and its functions absorbed within the fledgling Boston Redevelopment Authority. The Director of the state legislated agency charged with the development of Federally assisted renewal projects, would also direct the planning of this project. The Director would have one foot in the Mayor's office and the other in a separate agency of government. In the words of Walter McQuade writing in Fortune in June 1964, Logue wanted "to cook as well as serve." Collins agreed and Logue soon built up one of the most massive centralized planning and development agencies outside of the mythical Robert Moses of New York. (Logue also earned more money than the Mayor: \$30,000 a year). The new planning and development agency was authorized by Mass. General Laws Chapter 652, Acts of 1960, Chapter 121A.

The Black leadership of Roxbury was concerned that in this enormous and far reaching plan, their community would be lost. The next day the Freedom House Board sent a telegram to the Mayor "urging" that full consideration be given to our community in light of [your] recent announcement of broad scale neighborhood improvement". Mayor Collins promptly telephone the Snowdens to assure them that their community - and his old neighborhood - would be included in the urban renewal plan. A week later, on October 6, 1960, the Roxbury Citizen reported that Logue was committed to Washington Park. The many attractive features of the are,

especially the parks he said, "give hope that the neighborhood can be restored."

Logue had no choice but be committed to Washington Park. In July 1960 the Federal Urban Renewal Administration had approved the survey and planning grant for the original 186 acre urban renewal site which the city had applied for the year before. If Logue was to succeed with his much larger schemes for the Government Center, South End and Charlestown plans, he had to prove to Washington he could succeed in Washington Park. Moreover, it was impossible to ignore an organized and anxious community waiting for the Collins administration to act. Washington Park became the heart of Logue's Renewal Plans for Boston.

When Logue assumed the Directorship of the Boston Redevelopment Authority in late 1960, he quickly put the Washington Park urban renewal project in high gear. Sensitive to the growing national controversy over urban renewal's impact on black communities and well aware of the wrongs of the West End, Logue moved to establish a leadership group within the community to not only positively accept urban renewal for the community but to build a solid relationship between the B.R.A. and the leaders and organizations. Boston since the days of the Puritans has looked upon outsiders in government roles with distrust. The dust had not settled over the upset of the established Irish power represented in John Powers by the upstart Irish newcomer (who was only 40 years

old) and nerves were frayed in City Hall. The patronage power centers were not about to give up their turf easily and Logue - the quintessential outsider (he even graduated from Yale) - had a struggle to assume the leadership of the B.R.A. Washington would be less than anxious to invest it's money in a city whose development director was not in firm control. Logue needed his own base just as Collins need to build one. Both men appreciated the support of the Board and membership of Freedom House. Collins had long enjoyed their support in his Ward 12 elections and Logue the outsider was the one who would resurrect Roxbury.

In February of 1961, a new Freedom House addition was dedicated (which Associated Architects and Engineers had designed) and the Snowdens invited Logue and introduced him to members of the black elite.

From the very beginning, Muriel Snowden was convinced that only Freedom House was the proper agency by which Roxbury could negotiate with the B.R.A. If there was to be urban renewal in Washington Park, Freedom House wanted a major role. Logue never had any question in his mind that the Snowdens and Freedom House were the ones to organize the community around urban renewal. In April 1961, Freedom House was given a contract with the B.R.A. to assume the responsibility of community organization to pave the way for the urban renewal of the area of Washington Park.

In the Journal of Housing of September, 1963, Muriel Snowden described this new partnership between government and the community. "With the push for an urban renewal project in the Roxbury neighborhood and with the support of Municipal officials, the efforts of Freedom House took their place within a large conception. Here at last was a means of establishing the sought-after relationship between the citizens of a neighborhood and an over-all planning program where the success potential did seem great. Freedom House is the medium through which the vital two way communication between the B.R.A. and the local citizens were established. Because Freedom House has an intimate and sensitive knowledge of Washington Park, it has been possible to bring together very diverse elements to focus on urban renewal as a common concern."

Yet there was suspicion that Freedom House had sold out to the B.R.A. by accepting a monetary contract with them. In her article, Mrs. Snowden admitted that the suspicion was real but that it was overcome by the frank approach to its mission by Freedom House. While it is true that, as the next two years would prove, there was overwhelming support for the renewal of Washington Park, the suspicion of a sell out lingers to this day, especially when reality did not meet expectations. On the other had, the selection of a single group to organize for Urban renewal under the strongly organized direction of the Snowdens and Freedom House spared

Roxbury the spectacles of political infighting which happened in Charlestown during urban renewal there and what is so prevalent and so disruptive today in Roxbury. Logue wanted to move fast. His attention was being diverted to Government Center, the Prudential Center and the rest of the complex renewal program for Boston. He set up a schedule to have the plans completed by the end of June and the project underway in October.

Freedom House in turn set up a Citizens Committee named CURE (Citizens for Urban Renewal) which first met on May 1, 1961. There was a sense of urgency because of Logue's enormous pressure to produce a plan. The drive to begin building the new Washington Park in the fall was brought to a halt when Lloyd Sinclair, now the project director of Washington Park, announced that the renewal area would be expanded from the 186 acres originally described to 502 acres, and extend from Townsend Street to Seaver Street. The need to develop plans for the new area meant that the rush to complete a plan by fall could be slowed.

Freedom House had always wanted Upper Roxbury included in the renewal plan of Washington Park and so were thrilled with the news. Doubling the project boundaries did not violate the geographic or social integrity of the community.

The reasons for the expansion by the B.R.A. was that the area's housing stock had declined seriously since Sinclair had first investigated the area in 1958. Beginning in May, the B.R.A.

made a survey of the conditions of the buildings and land uses in the original area. It was apparent that close to 55% of the buildings were no substandard that they would have to be destroyed. This much clearance was intolerable to Logue and politically dangerous given the reactions against wholesale slum clearances around the country. Moreover, Logue wanted Washington Park to be Boston's first residential rehabilitation project. He wanted to take advantage of the provisions of the 1954 Housing Act which provided mortgage insurance available on liberal terms for private residential construction or rehabilitated housing. In July, President John F. Kennedy had signed the 1961 Housing Act which permitted the Federal National Mortgage Association to issue mortgage insurance and offer long term loans at below market rate interest for new housing for the moderate income resident.

Rehabilitation was the key to revitalizing Washington Park and to start off by bulldozing over half the buildings in the area would not be a good beginning. So Logue made the target area larger in order to soften the impact of the large clearance necessary in the project. It was also good business to include the residential area of the black elite in the urban renewal area. They were the most enthusiastic group for renewal and it would dispel the feelings that middle class was directing the relocations of the working class; now they would both be in the same renewal area. Nevertheless, in 1961 it was estimated that while only 7% of

the housing in Upper Roxbury was substandard and should be demolished, 78% of the stock in Middle Roxbury would have to be razed.

There was little sense of what the Washington Park Steering Committee saw as goals for their new community. As is usual among community groups, the specific is discussed for hours while the general overall plan of space is not understood. Residents are too close to their community to be able to think generally about it.

On October 18, 1961, the B.R.A. unveiled the first proposals for Washington Park. The maps illustrated the areas necessary to be cleared and the areas to be rehabilitated. The committee favored the plan that showed over 60% of the residents to be relocated all above Townsend Street. In early November, the B.R.A. returned with a plan that included the same schools, recreational and civic facilities, but with a residential clearance area of 40% of the residents. The Committee's reaction was blunt as the minutes of their November 13, 1961 meeting makes clear. "This was the last chance for Roxbury. The 40% relocation plan represented a 'glorified ghetto'. If the area doesn't get the full scale treatment now, we will be back where we are now in three years."

There was no faith among the Committee that houses in the areas slated for renewal could be rehabilitated. Their present owners, who were generally low income, were without the means to borrow the large sums necessary to improve their property. Renewal

to the committee meant clearance and relocation. Washington Park was to be returned to the past as an integrated middle class community. The low income "invaders", in the view of the steering committee, had to go.

This was not quite the way Edward Logue and the B.R.A. saw their plans, but they had to move carefully. Finally they reduced the amount of clearance necessary to 30% which the committee reluctantly went along with. On January 29, 1962, the Washington Park Steering Committee agreed to accept the general concept of the plan.

At this time, Lloyd Sinclair left the project. After seven years working in and around Washington Park, he was a little burned out. He was also not up to the pressure applied by Logue to put the Washington Park plans together fast. 1963 was an election year for the mayor and it would be a tremendous political boost to have Washington Park under construction and in the ground by the primaries. The new project director, Bob Rowland, was reputed to be one the most knowledgeable people in urban renewal administration. Rowland's experience was joined by the inheritance of not only Sinclair's top flight staff but also his excellent, intact community relationships that went beyond just Freedom House.

With this array of power, Rowland was able to put Washington Park in high gear.

On March 13, 1962 the first of four public meetings were held in which the B.R.A. described to the community at large its general plans for the Washington Park of the future. The plan in its general outline is almost exactly what was complete within a decade and what is today so permanent that for many Bostonians, it has always been there.

The area, triangular in shape, descended from a point at Dudley Square to Grove Hall. The west side was Washington Street from Dudley Square to Egleston Square.

Humboldt Avenue, and where it met Walnut Avenue at the Lewis School, was to be widened and improved as a central center axis of the new community. Cutting the area nearly in half, a two blocks north of Townsend Street was the new Crosstown Boulevard which would was originally to connect Columbia Road with the proposed inner belt at Heath Street.

There were five principle areas of clearance and rebuilding: the largest area was a swath along Warren Street form St. James to Townsend Streets which would be as thick as four city blocks and as narrow as one. This area includes the present day Warren Gardens, the Washington Park Mall, Charlestown Homes, Marksdale Gardens and the YMCA. At Dudley Square virtually the entire area below St. James Street - including the Dudley Street Baptist Church, the Rivoli Theater and the Opera House, would be raised for a new civic center of police station, library, courthouse and Boys Club.

Almost the entire length of Washington Street from St. James to Cobden Streets was to be cleared for a depth of one to two city blocks. Included in this clearance was the wooden 2 1/2 story house on 10 Elmore Street where Mayor Collins lived for two decades. (Also razed was the wooden house of Mayor Hugh O'Brien, the first Irish American Mayor in Boston's history, two blocks from Elmore Street on the corner of Townsend Street. The foundation walls are still visible today..below Academy Homes II). The Crosstown Boulevard cut a four lane slice out of the residential streets that are no more such as Bainbridge, Mayfair and Bower. Finally, near the center an area was cleared to build a new school, a neighborhood shopping center, a block of homes and a new home for St. Mark's Congregational Church on Townsend Street. Washington Park was to be doubled in size and a new recreation center built on cleared land where the houses along Bainbridge Street once stood. Three new schools were planned: on Harold and Hutchings Street behind Seaven Street, on Humboldt Avenue, and Waumbeck Street, and on Circuit Street.

An appendage to the triangle was the irregularly shaped 22 acre grounds of the Notre Dame Academy facing Washington Street and stretching back to Columbus Avenue. Ritchie Street separated the Academy from Marcella Playground. A fixture in Roxbury's Irish Catholic community life since 1854, it was the founding institution of Emmanuel College in the Fens in 1914. The Academy was certainly

will known to the young John Collins who no doubt cut through the property on his way to Marcella Playground.

When Notre Dame Academy announced its plans to remove to Hingham in 1965, the B.R.A. included the grounds within the Washington Park boundaries. The first new housing would be built there on 7.5 acres of the site for the families displaced by the massive clearance along Warren Street and elsewhere. In this way, housing would not have to be destroyed to build new housing for those displaced; nor would those that would have to relocate be forced to go beyond Washington Park.

These were the broad outlines of the Washington Park renewal area which the B.R.A. brought out to the community in the crucial year of 1962. To get out the word and to build up a consensus for renewal, the B.R.A. hired Freedom House with a \$27,000 grant to provide information on clearances, relocation and acquisition procedures. The production of newsletters and question and answer sheets and countless night meetings with families and street associations went into the Freedom House efforts to bring the Washington Park plans to as many people as possible. To some the spring and summer must have been exhilarating, to many others though—particularly the working people and tenants and the newly arrived resident, the mood must have been frightening. Many of them never responded and were rarely represented at the public meetings or neighborhood discussions with Freedom House. 'When you

ain't got nothing you got nothing to lose' seemed to be the attitude of the lower income black resident in 1962. So an interesting alliance of middle class elite and blue collar blacks—with some of the few whites who remained—coalesced around Freedom House to prepare the Washington Park Plan for mayoral approval and the consent of the United States Housing and Home Finance Agency.

Street by street, block by block, the Snowdens sent out the word to come to Freedom House and hear about urban renewal. Between March and June, 1962, there were 28 black meetings. One of the most important meetings was one of the first in March of 1962. Twenty two clergymen met with representatives of the B.R.A. and Freedom House to be briefed on the plans and the future of the renewal of Washington Park. Prior to this, the clergy and their churches had not been included as a whole into the planning process. Important Black churches like St. Mark's Congregational Center—a focus of black culture, politics and society since it began in 1925—were included from the beginning of the CURE meetings, but the meaning of renewal to the churches, their goals and their congregations had not been isolated and addressed. The move to organize the clergy, which seems to have been an idea of the B.R.A.—was very important in two ways:

1. It built a very important and reliable base of support of renewal; and

2. It opened the door to the Church as a development entity for new housing. No less than four of the development blocks in Washington Park were planned to be built by a church; three of these were built as will be seen.

Momentum was building on Washington Park's renewal plans. On June 11, 1962, Edward Logue went before the City Council's Urban Renewal Committee to announce Boston's Workable Program for Community Improvement. This Program was described in detail in the draft application for Early Land Acquisition which the B.R.A. had just completed and awaited the approval of the Council, the community and the mayor. "Rehabilitation is the key to the Boston Program," Logue declared. "It makes a shift away from the clearance project to the renewal rehabilitation project aimed at preserving an entire neighborhood." "The heart and soul" of that renewal, Logue continued, "is planning with people. The process is simple. It begins with a simple act of faith. The B.R.A. and the neighborhood work together...and this joint effort is the basis of success."

On June 25, 1962, 1,100 people packed the B.R.A. Hearing Room to listen to and submit their opinions on the Workable Program and the Early Acquisition request. Opposition to the plan was limited mainly to those whose homes were in the way of the proposal cross-town boulevard. Otherwise, most of the residents were conceived with the timing of the project. When would it finally begin?

After talking about it since 1954, most people were convinced it was inevitable and wanted it to get under way. Renewal to most was a blessing for the neighborhood. To others, it was an opportunity to leave an undesirable place of residence.

#### IV.

On August 14, 1962, Mayor John Collins approved the Early Land Acquisition Application to the U.S. on Housing and Home Finance Agency requesting a loan of \$5,098,326. Under Section 102 (A) of Title I of the Housing Act of 1949.

The Early Acquisition Application stated what the conditions were in Washington Park based on the studies conducted from the fall of 1959 through the spring of 1962 by the erstwhile while Planning Board, the B.R.A., the Building Department and the Health Department. The Application then stated how these conditions would be improved.

Washington Park would be Boston's first urban renewal area in which the emphasis was placed on the improvement of the entire neighborhood. Early Acquisition was intended to acquire land within the project area in order to provide relocation sites for housing, schools and other public buildings.

The project area contained 502 acres, 71% of which was residential. It was proposed to clear 85 acres of approximately 985 buildings. 248 acres of residential properties containing

1,772 buildings would be rehabilitated. The B.R.A. found the following conditions in the Washington Park area in 1961:

1. The total number of buildings was 2,834. 1,520 were judged to be dilapidated. Based on 45 specific criteria for housing defects, a building was considered necessary for removal if it contained two or more major defects such as deteriorated condition not correctable by normal maintenance, foundation walls sinking, sagging roof, inadequate or unsafe heating, plumbing or electrical facilities or vermin infested.
2. Overcrowding of buildings.
3. Excessive density in buildings.
4. Conversions to stores and other commercial uses incompatible with the residential neighborhood.
5. Inadequate public buildings. The Howe (built 1868), Boardman (1900), Williams (1892) and Goodwin (1925) were all non fire proof buildings which the Planning Board recommended closing the late 1950's.
6. Inadequate play space based on the National Recreation Association standards of 2.6 acres of open space for every 19 acres of built on land.
7. Real estate prices from 1955 to 1960 in large parts of the renewal area had dropped; particularly north of

Townsend Street and between Humboldt Avenue and Elin Hill Ave.

8. Mortgage lending was down.
9. Population drop of 20% from 1950 figures of 32,650 to 1960 when the count was 25,922.

The area nevertheless had much to be commended.

1. It was in a desirable location 15-20 minutes from the downtown.
2. It had good mass transit connections.
3. The housing stock was in most cases of sound construction with high ceilings, ample room, light and circulation.
4. The community was near Franklin Park "the major city park with its zoo, golf course and woodlands."
5. There was active citizen participation.

The area was selected to fulfill three major objectives:

1. To substantially increase the supply of desirable housing.
2. Improve the neighborhood living conditions.
3. Prevent the spread of blight and deterioration to adjacent neighborhoods.

Three sections would be focused on to use as examples for the entire district.

Section I - Between Warren Street from Regent Street to Monroe, Walnut and Humboldt. 68 acres. 73% the

principle buildings were beyond repair and would have to be razed.

Section II - Townsend Street, Humboldt and Harold Street. 7.2 acres. 61% of the principle buildings would have to be razed.

Section III - Deckard, Waumbeck and Humboldt Ave. 10.7 acres. 75% of the principle buildings would have to be razed.

The total acquisition costs based on appraisals done by the B.R.A. was \$3,150,000. The cost of demolition, including back-filling and grading, was estimated at \$1,000 per building.

Between August and the first of the New Year 1963, the B.R.A. refined and added the details to what would be built and where in the Washington Park area. Specific sites were designated for housing, commercial buildings, schools, parks and the civic center boundary was blocked out.

At a public hearing before the Boston Redevelopment Board held at Roxbury Memorial High School (the known as Boston Technical High School) on January 14, 1963, over 1,200 people jammed the auditorium to hear the B.R.A.'s director give an overall summation of the plan. Logue predicted a showplace neighborhood for Washington Park, the Roxbury Citizen reported on January 17th.

"There will be no long range solutions to the social problems unless we get rid of the bad housing, and 1963 will see major effort to solve some of those problems."

As Logue went over the plan, he was interrupted by applause by the enthusiastic audience several times, probably the only time a B.R.A. Director would be applauded anywhere in Boston in the future. Among those showing support for the plans were Ward 12 State Representatives Alfred S. Brothers and Royal Bolling and several church leaders, including Rev. Walter C. Davis of Charles Street, A.M.E., Rev. Thomas Tierney of St. Joseph's, Rev. Arnold Brown from Buelah Pilgrim Holiness Church in Grove Hall and the venerable Rev. Samuel Laviscount of St. Mark's Congregational Church. Indeed, the remarks of several clergy turned into sermons and the hearing lasted until 1 a.m. One clergyman declared in phrases reminiscent of the Puritan founders of Roxbury, that urban renewal would be the Garden of Eden. Another brought his church choir to celebrate the coming of the new Jerusalem.

The plan was impressive and a great victory for the adherents of renewal, led by Freedom House. There were eight housing developments, including the remainder of the Notre Dame Academy site, a central shopping center, two neighborhood shopping centers, a community health center, three new elementary schools, three new parks plus an enlarged Washington Park, improvements to most of the roads particularly Humboldt Avenue, Walnut Avenue and the new cross

town boulevard, and a new St. Mark's church. The new Washington Park would be a haven for youngsters and teenagers: planned to be built was a new YMCA, a new Boy's Club, and a recreation center at Washington Park to include a gymnasium, swimming pool, skating rink, basketball courts, and a baseball and football field. Crowning the entire renewal area would be a new seat of local government: to include a police station, municipal offices, a courthouse, and public library. A new branch library would also be built in Grove Hall opposite Freedom House. There were no plans for public housing, although it was estimated at the time that 75% of the 1,275 families to be relocated were eligible for public housing. Throughout the entire planning process, public housing was hotly debated and strongly opposed. Orchard Park and all that it represented in social, class and economic terms to the Black middle class leadership was not welcome in the new Washington Park. The B.R.A. heard this and did not include publicly subsidized housing anywhere in Washington Park, except for two elderly residential towers.

In the fall of 1962, as the B.R.A. planners began to lay out specific housing blocks, they realized that more land would be necessary to provide adequate sites. When finally completed, the clearance percentage in Washington Park was higher than in Charlestown on the South End. 35% of the existing homes were slated for demolition.

The greatest amounts of clearance was to take place in the original 186 acre renewal site north of Townsend Street. Most of the homes were 2 1/2 story wooden buildings of the type in which the residences of low income, working class families with incomes of about \$3,000 a year or less (in 1960 terms that was poverty line income).

Early in 1963, the B.R.A. set up a Relocation office at 105 Crawford Street in the offices of Temple Beth Hamidrash Hagadol. In June, this office would be expanded to house an 82 person staff which would oversee the building of Washington Park. Between December 1962 and the end of the year 1966, nearly 7,000 people were relocated (about 1,700 families) both within and outside of Washington park as a result of the demolition of housing. The vast majority of these residents (97%) went into standard housing. With a population of 25,000 in 1960, and considering that population continued to decline during the planning stages as owners simply abandoned their helpless properties, that means that 1/3 of the residents of the Washington Park area were relocated. Almost no one was relocated in the area between Humboldt, Townsend and Warren Street, however. That area was virtually untouched.

Yet, among the blue collar black residents, many of them with few roots in the community, there was a 2 to 1 feeling to optimism about urban renewal in their community even if they took most of

its weight. (Based on a survey was conducted in 1963 by a B.R.A. consultant.)

The total cost of the Washington Park renewal plan was estimated at \$75 million. Of this cost, \$25,000,000 would be the city's commitment to rebuild the streets, clear the land, put in water, sewer and electricity for the new housing, and to build the schools, playgrounds and the civic center. This was expected to generate \$50 million in private investment which would build housing on the cleared sites. The Boston Redevelopment Authority would acquire the land, clear it, prepare it with roads and utilities to suit the developer and then sell the land to the developer. Two thirds of this cost would be born by the U.S. Housing Finance Agency; the state would match the remainder of the city's appropriation. Section 112 of the Housing Act of 1961 also provided for 50% compensation on tax exempt land held by institutions. The land owned by the Archdiocese around St. Joseph's Church on Circuit Street, the Sisters of Notre Dame estate and the very land of the synagogue used by the B.R.A. for its renewal office were purchased with the generous terms provided by Section 112 of the Acts of 1961. The remainder of the money which Boston had to contribute was raised through the sale of municipal bonds.

(Interestingly 90% of the salaries of the B.R.A. staff at Washington Park was paid for from Federal Funds including all but \$5,000 of Director Logue's generous \$30,000 a year salary.)

Rehabilitation played a major role in the Washington Park urban renewal area. The area was subdivided into 13 areas. Among them select priority areas were drawn up where new construction would encourage the investment in the rehabilitation of existing properties.

The prospects of a vast publically funded renewal project for Washington Park made the financial institutions more willing to lend. In early 1963, after meeting with the B.R.A., the Home Finance Agency and Mayor Collins, a consortium of 21 Boston Banks led by the Suffolk Franklin Bank (now the Mutual Bank for Savings) announced a \$6 million pool of mortgage money for residential home owners. This was a major breakthrough since for nearly ten years those very same banks had shunned Roxbury.

The first rehabilitation loan was written in March, 1963 by The Joseph Warren Cooperative Bank (a Roxbury institution since 1910 at 2371 Washington Street. The bank has been closed since about 1972). It granted a loan to attorney Victor C. Bynoe who had recently acquired a home opposite Horatio Harris Park. In June, the Boston Five Cents Savings Bank issued a mortgage insured by the Federal Housing Agency to Lester Clemente for his 6 unit building at 74 Hutchings Street. This was the biggest mortgage in the

renewal area up to that time and one of the largest in Roxbury within memory.

The Rehabilitation Loan program at Washington Park prompted more residential owners to repair and bring their properties up to proper code than nearly any other project in the country. The program enlarged the capacity to large numbers of black families to finance repairs to their homes or buy a better one. Nevertheless many applicants lacked sufficient credit or did not earn enough income; they earned less so they lived in the worst housing. Many of these moved out and the B.R.A. purchased their property.

For the B.R.A., the priority was demolition of blight and the construction of new housing using all the financial tools and legislative enabling statutes available.

On January 25, 1963, the B.R.A. submitted to the "Urban Renewal Administration its final project repair for Washington Street Urban Renewal Area: Application of Loan and Grant."

There were five basic goals of the Urban Renewal Plan...

"To stimulate and facilitate public, private and institutional development efforts in such a way as to

1. Preserve the neighborhood
2. Assure public health and safety
3. Strengthen the physical pattern of neighborhood services.
4. Reinforce the fabric of family and community life; and

5. Provide a wholesome framework of environmental conditions for contemporary living.

These goals would be achieved through 19 specific planning and design objectives. Among these included:

1. Improve the quality, condition and maintenance of existing individual property for safe, decent housing through rehabilitation.
2. Remove deteriorated buildings which impair the flow of investment, mortgages and insurance coverage.
3. Prevent the erosion of property values by eliminating substandard buildings which contribute to the spread of blight.
4. Create new opportunities for private investment particularly moderate density, economically constructed housing of maximum, architectural quality.
5. New and improved schools, play areas and other open spaces.
6. Create more accessible and attractive concentrations of shopping facilities.
7. To gather together within an overall, unified and viable framework of project design, the concert of public and private uses.
8. To prevent the creation of further slums.

Points 4, 5, 6, and 7 will be focused on as the study of the Washington Park renewal area moves from planning to execution.



Washington Park Begun:  
Urban Renewal Administration Commissioner  
William L. Slayton (seated, Left), Mayor  
John F. Collins (seated, center), the late  
Mrs. Muriel Snowden (seated, right).  
Top right is Edward J. Logue.



Mayor John F. Collins and B.R.A. Director  
Edward J. Logue in 1964.

## CHAPTER IV

### The Building of The Washington Park Renewal Area

#### I.

On April 23, 1963 at a Boston College Seminar called "Planning with People — the Washington Park Story"; the formal approval of the Washington Park plan was announced by the Federal Urban Renewal Administration Commissioner William L. Slayton.

On May 10th, the Federal Housing & Home Financy Agency Administrator Robert C. Weaver came to Boston to participate in the groundbreaking of Academy Homes on Columbus Avenue and Ritchie Street. The first new housing to go up in Roxbury in over thirty years would be the start of the building of the Washington Park Renewal Area.

#### II.

The Urban Renwal Plan for Washington Park submitted to Washington in January included Chapter IV, remarkably detailed and carefully prescribed standards for the residential, commercial and institutional building to replace the demolished blocks and streets. Height limitations, setback restrictions, the amount of density and the percentage of parking spaces were all specified.

The height restrictions for Academy Homes site E was 120 feet, where at Site C-5A St. Joseph's housing, the restriction was at 40 feet. All institutional and public buidings were for the most part limited to the 40 foot height. The commercial and industrial blocks at Dudley Square, where Modern Electroplating & Enameling built their new plant in 1968, the height restriction was 60 feet. Depending on the area, all housing had a minimum set back of 30 to 70 feet. Academy Homes II on Washington Street is the maximum set back and Marksdale Housing on Townseend Street is the minumum.

Developers, when they reached agreement with the B. R. A., had to agree to keep

these restrictions in effect for 40 years. (Academy Homes on Columbus Avenue has 13 years left in its agreement, for example).

Sections 1101 and 1102 of the Plan were in effect for 100 years; these governed affirmative action and anti discrimination sections of Federal and State laws.

In addition to an in-house design team of architects and landscape architects, the B. R. A. also assembled a Design Advisory Committee which met monthly with the B. R. A. staff to review the projects within the urban renewal area.

This Committee was made up of

- Hugh Stubbins, architect, chairman
- Jose Luis Sert, architect and dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Design
- Lawrence Anderson, architect and dean of the M. I. T. School of Architecture
- Pietro Belluschi, architect; and
- Nelson Aldrich, architect.

The type of housing which characterizes Washington Park was the Garden Apartment. This was cluster housing built around a terraced square or court, usually keeping as many of the existing trees as possible and following the contours of the land. The grid pattern of streets was so as to maximize the space and to increase the privacy of the homes.

Because it was the first new housing in the Urban Renewal area, Logue and his design team put a great deal of thought into the design and development of Academy Homes I. First, Logue turned to Carl Koch and Associates to design the housing development (Koch and Logue had worked together on Liberty Square Residences in New Haven).

The challenge here was to produce a well built complex of high density family housing specifically for the low income and blue collar wage earner displaced by renewal along Warren St., Walnut Avenue and Bower Street. To achieve this, Koch and his team devised

an advanced building technique of standardized and interchangeable components of pre-stressed concrete units delivered to the site and built up like boxes. End columns supported the load bearing walls to eliminate a foundation hole except for a trench for utilities. Curtain walls were stress-skinned plywood.

For financing, the B.R.A. used Section 221(D)(3) of the Housing Act of 1961. If any one piece of legislation built Washington Park, Section 221(D)(3) came the closest. This section was aimed at the redevelopment of slum areas for moderate income family housing through a joint program of mortagage insurance and long term loans at below market rates. This package would be made available to non-profit organizations and cooperatives, certain public agencies and limited dividend corporations to build the housing. In 1963, Section 221 housing averaged 57% less than regular, F.H.A. multi family housing. Moreover, the state provided for tax exemptions for non profit organization engaged in non-profit housing.

Logue lined up the Building Service Employees International Union (BUSE) Local 254, AFL-CIO to develop Academy Homes under a non profit satellite called B.U.S.E., Boston, Inc.

The entire project was broken up into 5 parcels, of which B.U.S.E. and its contractor, The Development Corporation of America (D.C.A.) built over the next four years. The first parcel (E) was at Columbus and Ritchie Street, which D.C.A. built first. After the Notre Dame Academy moved to the South Shore, parcel E2A at Washington St. and Dimmock Street was built together with the one of the largest single parcels in the renewal area, site B3, the 7.5 acres between Cobden and Townsend Streets on Washington Street.

It must be remembered that the Boston Redevelopment Authority acquired the land, prepared the site and then negotiated a price to the developer, who would assume full responsibility from then on! After the Authority concluded that the building was built accord-

ing to the plan, building codes and the specifications of the specific site, it signed off on the property.

On June 24, 1963, the B. R. A. agreed to complete the site preparation in an agreement with B. U. S. E. Inc. The site would be rough graded and the roadways would be built except for paving by July 31, 1963.

This was the process by which all the other developments were built in Washington Park during the remainder of the 1960's.

Charlame Park

Charlame Houses

Marksdale I & II

Warren Gardens

St. Joseph Housing, and

Hinton Terrace.

The most significant private investment in the Washington Park Renewal Area were these six housing sites, plus Westminster Court on Walnut Avenue.

In his final report as Director of the B. R. A. on August 4, 1967, Edward Logue wrote that he considered Academy Homes I to be an outstanding achievement. So much so, that the city named the two principle streets in Academy Homes "Weaver Way" after Robert C. Weaver, the HFA Administrator and "Slayton Way" in honor of William L. Slayton, Urban Renewal Administrator.

The professional community was impressed too. The *Progressive Architecture*, in its 12th Annual Design Awards issue for January 1965, gave Carl Koch & Associates a Citation for Residential design for Accademy Homes I.

Academy Homes I was completed in 1965 and Academy homes II was fully occupied

by early 1968. Academy Homes I had 202 apartments in 3 story buildings; Academy II had 315 apartments in buildings that rose from three to five stories.

With Academy homes underway, and with millions of dollars committed to Washington Park from the Urban Renewal Administration of the F.H.A., John Collins announced his candidacy for re-election in June 1963. During the past three years, he said, his administration had launched the biggest, most far reaching urban renewal scheme in Boston's history. He asked for the support of the voters "so that we may complete the job." Interestingly, given Collins' strong support by Italian-American voters in 1959, his opponent in November, 1963 was the popular city councillor Gabriel Piemonte. Collins won by a bigger margin than in 1959 — he beat Piemonte by 34,775 votes. (Few of these voters were in South Boston, where the memory of John Powers defeat was still real. Also there was a feeling, perhaps that renewal was skipping South Boston). Collins most ardent campaigner was Edward Logue. As he had done with this mentor in New Haven, Richard Lee, Logue tied his fortunes with that of the mayor.

### III.

During the immigrant period, the church had played a dominant role in easing the transition to American life and softening the hardships of poverty through settlement houses, homes for the aged, parochial and industrial schools and welfare agencies such as the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in the South End. One of the most interesting facts of the Washington Park urban renewal area is the role of the church as developer.

Three churches and a synogogue fell to the bulldozers of urban renewal; a fourth church was razed but rebuilt nearby.

The oldest was a genuine landmark in Dudley Square for over a century, the tall wooden gothic house of the Dudley St. Baptist Church, located at the present day police

station. The Baptists moved to Dudley Square in 1819 and built their second and grandest church in 1852. The church was directly opposite the Dudley Elevated Terminal and for over half a century, riders on the elevated cars could look into the wooden gothic tracing of the spire of the church. Slated to be razed for the New Civic Center, the Minister and the congregation held a farewell service on December 27, 1964. The congregation removed to Putnam Chapel at the First Church at Roxbury on Eliot Square.

The other church to be razed was used for two years as a site office for the B.R.A. This was St. Richard's Church on Buena Vista Street, built about 1912 on the grounds of the Isaac Fenno mansion (which stood opposite the church on a rock outcrop at the corner of Walnut Avenue and Warren St.). A stone church built by the Unitarians, it was purchased by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese and converted to a Catholic Church for a black congregation. Richard Cardinal Cushing presided over the opening of the new church — renamed appropriately enough — St. Richard — on April 7, 1946. It was demolished in 1965 for Warren Gardens.

The third church was the Episcopal St. James Church on St. James St. near Washington St, nearly opposite the MBTA bus barns at Guild St. St. James Church was established in 1833 as Roxbury's first Episcopal Church. Slated for housing, the site remained vacant for over 20 years. In 1989 the St. James Estates was completed by the St. James Development Corporation. Financing by the Bank of Boston, the wooden row house complex set on the site of the church was designed by Fuller Design with Stull & Lee, architects.

On Crawford Street, Synagogue Beth Hamidrash Hagadol had been converted into the BRA nerve center for Washington Park in June 1963. The original intention of the plan was to raze the temple and adjacent houses and turn the 4 acre lot into a public park.

This plan was altered when the Crispus Attucks Center was built there in 1972.

The only church that was rebulit was St. Mark's Church at 216 Townsend St. near the corner of Humboldt Avenue. The wooden buiding was built by 1890 as a Quaker meeting house. In 1925 it was purchased by a black congregational society who named their new home St. Mark's Church. It was one of the earliest black churches in Roxbury and for many years the dominant one. This was due in part to the energy and personality of Rev. Samuel L. Laviscount who came from Detroit in October 12, 1928 to be the pastor of St. Marks. Although he "retired" in 1960, he played a role in the church until his death in 1979 at the age of 90.

Rev. Laviscount laid the cornerstone on Sunday morning April 27, 1941 for the new St. Mark's "Social Center for Negro Boys and Girls." The Social Center would be for the next 25 years the social center of black culture in Roxbury. It was the one place for black residents to go to involve themselfe in cultural, recreational, social and political activities.

The second largest black congregation at the time was the Charles St. A. M. E. Church, one of the oldest black churches in Boston. Established in 1833 at the Charles St. Church at the foot of Beacon Hill, the church followed its members to their new community in 1939. They acquired one of Boston's great church buildings — All Souls Unitarian Church which J. Williams Beal designed at the corner of Warren St. and Elm Hill Avenue in 1888. (Beal also designed the Eliot Congregational Church on Walnut Ave. and Dale St. It was dedicated in Feb., 1889. Together with the handsome sequence of three brick apartment blocks built opposite All Souls in 1904, it forms one of the finest, most distinctive urban streetscapes in Roxbury and Boston.

St. Marks and Charles St. A. M. E. would be the developers of the first two cluster

housing projects in the early acquisition tracts 1 and 2.

In October 1963, Mayor John Collins and BRA Director Logue unveiled at City Hall the architects plans for \$2.5 million in housing for moderate income home owners. Marksdale Gardens, developed by St. Mark's Church was planned for the 3 1/2 acres of tract two along Townsend Street between Humboldt Avenue and Harold St. 82 units of housing was planned for the site which contained 16 homes.

Charles St. A. M. E. Church planned to build 92 units on a portion of Tract 1 at Humboldt Avenue, Walnut Avenue and the edge of the new crosstown boulevard. Both churches formed on-profit corporations under Section 221(D)(3) provisions.

Marksdale Gardens was designed by the minority owned and operated architectural firm, Associated Architects & Engineers. (Henry Boles, Chief Architect). Their plans were approved in Dec. 1963 and the housing was occupied by the end of 1964. All the interior public streets, curbs, drains, and electrical systems for streetlights were built by the City of Boston.

Charlame Park's roads were also built around the building plans designed by Bedar & Alperts. The apartments were ready for occupancy by September of 1964. There were 92 units built at Charlame Park.

In May 1966, a building permit was issued for the extension of Marksdale Gardens for 64 additional units between Humboldt Avenue, the new boulevard and Hazelwood Street. Associated Architects & Engineers were the architects for the extension as well.

This section of St. Mark's Church's development awaited the widening of Warren St. between Hazelwood and Walnut Avenue for the new crosstown boulevard and the widening of Humboldt Avenue from Townsend St. to Walnut Avenue.

Boston has few cross town, east-west streets. Part of the Washington Park Renewal

plan was to alleviate that problem in the geographic center of Boston by laying out a boulevard which would connect Columbia Road with Heath Street.

At Heath Street, the boulevard would connect with the proposed inner belt of I-95. The plan for the boulevard caused it to go along the edge of Washington Park a few house lots in from Elmore Street and follow the alignment of Bower Street to Warren. The route was chosen largely because Bower St., between Monroe to Catawba at City Hall on School str had the poorest housing in the renewal area. The first segment of the crosstown boulevard was completed in 1965 between Warren St. and Humboldt Avenue. This was the crucial leg because Marksdale Gardens II, Charlame Homes, the Elderly tower planned by the B. H. A., the shopping mall and the new YMCA were all built on Tract I on both sides of the new boulevard. The remainder of the boulevard was completed by 1967. It was named Martin Luther King Blvd. in the wake of the Civil Rights leader's assassination.

Marksdale Gardens II included discontinuing Monroe Street and creating a new Hazelwood Street which would form the boundary of the YMCA. Marksdale II was financed at \$1,107,400 by the Church. It was ready and occupied in 1966.

The widening of Townsend Street and Humboldt Ave. to create the parcel for Marks-dale Gardens meant that the old church and social hall would be razed. On Aug. 21, 1968, a permit was issued for a new St. Mark's Church designed by Associated Architects and Engineers. The 1 1/2 story church would face Humboldt Avenue with a broad swept roofline and a short steeple. The church was definitely built on solid rock because over 1,200 cubic feet of puddingstone (a very hard stone) was excavated for the foundation.

The social center merged with the newly formed Ecumenical Center, located near Freedom House at 25 Crawford St., in September, 1967. The Ecumenical Center was funded by the United Church of Christ and the Department of Housing and Urban Development. In

addition to operating costs, the FHA and H. U. D. granted \$867,000 towards a new facility that would act as the multi-purpose community center which the St. Mark's social center had been for a generation. In July 1972, the Ecumenical Center finally broke ground on its new \$2 million center after 6 years of negotiation, between the United Church of Christ, the BRA and HUD. The site was the old synagogue which the BRA had vacated and razed. Goody, Clancy & Associates were the architects for the United Church of Christ, developers. In July, 1977 when the Ecumenical Center moved into its new building, the principle agencies were the Crispus Attucks Children's Center and the Roxbury Beautification Program. Today the Crispus Attucks Children's Center occupies the building where Temple Hamidrash Hagodol once stood.

The second half of the housing developed by Charles St. A. M. E. church was begun at a groundbreaking on September 26, 1965. It is located in a rare grid pattern between Humboldt Avenue tucked behind old brick apartment houses and the loading docks of Family Foodland at the Washington Park Mall. The houses are simple brick blocks of attached row houses. The houses are two stories each with 8 houses per row with a total of 38 units. The development was designed by Bedar and Alpers and completed in 1967.

Sewer and water lines and all the roads were built by the city for a total cost of nearly \$100,000. Charlame Homes I had a over \$110,000 of sewer and water lines and new roads built by the B. R. A. Contractors.

At the end of 1965, the public improvements of land acquisition, razing of buildings, new sewer and water lines, street lights, rebuilt roads and pavements including the interiors of the three housing developments and the beginning of the crosstown boulevard was estimated to have cost \$1 million.

The third church to develop housing as a 221(D)(3) non profit agency was St.

Joseph's Church located on Circuit Street near Washington just outside of Dudley Square. It was Roxbury's first Catholic Church created in 1845 by Bishop Benedict Fenwick, the second Bishop of Boston. If the arrival of the Episcopalians created a stir in 1833, the creation of a catholic parish was clearly a sign of changing times in old Roxbury.

Only a few years earlier on August 11, 1834 the Ursaline Convent in Charlestown had been burned to the ground. The sisters fled to Parker Hill where they were guarded by the Roxbury militia from the taunts of local bigots. (Their place of refuge was acquired by the Redemptorist Fathers in Sept. 1869 and on May 28, 1876 the cornerstone of the Mission Church was laid).

Roxbury seemed to be a little more tolerant when Fr. Patrick O'Bierne was appointed the pastor for a parish which extended from Roxbury to Walpole and Medford. Through his efforts the handsome brick church in the English Country Church style was erected in 1846 beneath a huge ledge on Circuit Street. The ledge stretched from Circuit to Regent Streets and for many years was called Tommy's Rock in honor of Tommy Hommagen, a freed slave who lived in a small cottage facing Washington Street, at the turn of the 19th century. This location was on the outskirts of town and Tommy had a little business of caring for the horses and hungry travelers on the stage coach line. So colorful a character was Tommy Hommagen that until the 1940's, St. Joseph's was nicknamed Tommy's Rock Church. (There was even a Tommy's Rock social club in the 1940's.)

St. Joseph's Church was Mayor Collins' parish church and he attended mass in a very spacious sanctuary, so built as to include no interior columns. The walls were load bearing with thick wooden cross beams cut into decorative patterns. The beams carried the weight of the church to the walls, sunk into solid puddingstone. On August 26, 1948, Archbishop Richard J. Cushing presided over the centennial of St. Joseph's Church with

the blessings of Pope Pius XII.

The archdiocese had acquired much land over the years around the church to build the rectory, convent and school all nestled against each other in the shade of the church. In 1965, it was designated the developer of a cluster housing complex between Circuit, Dale & Regent Streets and fronting on Washington Street. Paul G. Feloney was the architect of the 125 units in row house style similar to Marksdale Gardens.

The final church developer was unable to begin its project. In 1965, the 12th Baptist Church ws to begin construction of 35 units of low to middle income housing at two adjacent sites prepared by the B. R. A. at Harold and Waumbeck and Harold and Holworthy Streets. 12th Baptist Church was an emergent church with a long history of serving Boston's black community. It moved to the Advent Christian Church on Warren Street opposite Regent St. from Shawmut Avenue and Ball Street in lower Roxbury in 1956. In 1965, the young State Representative Michael Haynes became pastor of 12th Baptist and in the next 25 years he would make that church into one of the centers of black cultural life.

The project was never begun although the parcels were created by blocking Harold Street from becoming a through way thereby creating a parcel at Harold and Holworthy and Harold and Waumbeck Streets with Hollander Street in the center. Holworthy & Hollander Streets would be turned into a horse-shoe shaped street by the clearance for the Trotter School. By reducing the number of through streets in the area — Harold St., for example, formerly ran from Seaver St. to Walnut Avenue opposite the Lewis School — the street patterns would be maintained as residential, not through ways. Vacant for over 25 years, only recently was a portion of the site built on. These are the Garrison Trotter Town Houses, a series of 12 row houses set in blocks of 3 designed by Paul J. Donnelly and constructed in modular units. Work began in 1986, but owing to financial difficulties, the

houses are just now — in late 1990 — coming on the market. However the land between Hollworthy and the Crispus Attuck Center on Crawford Street is shabby and vacant and there is no glimmer of any change to that fact.

Two lots on a rebuilt and widened Humboldt Avenue at Deckard, Holworthy and Waumbeck Streets opposite the site for the Trotter School were designated as relocation spaces for churches. One church was St. Mary's, the second Catholic Church in the Washington Park renewal area located at Seaver St. and Walnut Avenue. The other church may well have been St. James. In another example of a site designation not being successful, these large-spaces lay vacant until 1970.

In October of 1970, a new program with unfortunate consequences was used to develop the land. This was the Infill Housing Program, one of the first housing programs of the administration of Mayor Kevin H. White, who succeeded John Collins in January, 1968. In July 1968, White's first B.R.A. Director Hale Champion announced a program of "instant housing" to be built with a specially created prefabricated system of concrete slabs and blocks for rapid construction. This uniform block housing would be built on the 300 city owned vacant lots scattered around the city. The developer would be the Development Corporation of America which was primarily a contractor responsible for building all of Academy Homes and Marksdale Gardens. Don Stull was the architect of the prefabricated housing. Major insurance companies were the lending agents.

Two blocks of infill housing were built in 1971. They, like the ones at Egleston Square, Rockland St. and Martin Luther King Blvd., were never completed and lay vacant for over 15 years. Overextended financially and unable to withstand the recession of the early 1970's, D.C.A. went bankrupt leaving the city dotted with incompletely housing. The city razed the two blocks on Humboldt Avenue and on April 11, 1986 a building permit was

issued to Cruz Development to erect Cass House Apartments at 140 Humboldt Avenue at Holworthy St.

Richard Walwood designed the apartment block which was completed in October 1968. Cruz and Walwood combined for the first time in 1971 to develop, design and build the 4 story, 38 unit apartment block known as Taurus Apartments at 120 Humboldt Avenue and Deckard Street. This building was completed in 1973.

The year 1965 was probably the peak year of activity at the Washington Park renewal area. In its Progress Report for 1965 (dated Jan. 13, 1966), the B.R.A. Director of Washington Park, Samuel Thompson wrote that

"the downward spiral of blight feeding on itself has not only been stopped, but actually reversed. Indeed, property values in certain areas of Washington Park have actually increased."

The highlight of the busy year was a large rally at Freedom House on October 19, 1965 with the keynote address given by the BRA Director Edward Logue. Logue spoke to the audience of 30 months and \$30 million of progress and improvements.

"460 families are enjoying modern apartments in Marksdale, Charlame, and Academy Houses. 265 displaced families have purchased homes. Washington Park is visibly moving forward to the day when blight will almost be eradicated."

Indeed, it seemed that way. Freedom House was at the height of its "planning with people" process counseling, advising and assisting residents on rehabilitation, renewal plans, relocation information and logistics and a host of other projects at countless meetings. It helped sponsor a year of volunteer help during the summer organizing college students who painted houses, repaired porches and stairs, cleaned vacant lots and provided

supervision for young people.

Education of the young people of Roxbury has been the foundation of Freedom House for the past generation and it began with Urban Renewal. Freedom House arranged and coordinated tours with school groups during February and March of 1965 showing, explaining and listening to what was said about the renewal of Roxbury. Slide shows, maps, pictures and models dazzled the students of the 4th, 5th and 6th grades and junior high school. The students were invited to show what they had learned about urban renewal by entering a poster and essay contest.

Awarads of \$50 each for the top two creative artists and writers were given out on April 14, 1965 at the Lewis Junior High School. Attorney General Edward Brooke and Mayor John Collins were two of the judges. (One runner up entry in the contest is shown on the next page).

In August 1965, the Washington Park Renewal office assisted the owners of a large apartment block at 24-236 Seaver Street, opposite Franklin Park, to receive a \$1.25 million F.H.A. mortgage. Coupled with a building at 105 Maple St., they totaled 150 units of housing which required \$700,000 in new wiring, plumbing, kitchens, bathrooms and exterior masonry work. It was one of the largest multi-family buidings in the entire renewal program to be rehabilitated.

Rehabilitation was confined namely to single family homes and one of the major efforts of Freedom House throughout the sprocess of rebuilding Washington Park was to encourage home ownership. To do that, it acquired an abandoned 11 room sinle family house at 178 Humbold Avenue, nearly opposite Temple Hamidash Hagadol as a Pilot House. Freedom House bought the house for \$4,100 in the late summer and sought out contributions who would donate materials to remodel it. Companies like Circle Supply;

Lewis Jr. High School

Melvin Bedet

Grade VII Room 110 March 24, 1965

"Urban Renewal" In Roxbury"

I think Roxbury ought to get renewed. Why? Well I'll tell you why. First of all most of the houses are all ageing away and getting rundown. After all of this Roxbury isn't what it used to be. Well are we going to stand by and let this happen or are we going to do something about it. People are starting an Urban Renewal Center in Roxbury after all of the advertising we did. Now don't you feel a little proud of yourself, well you ought to be. There is still more to be done so don't put the old flame away yet. I thank you and congratulate you.

Johns Manville, roofing and siding; Blacker & Shepard Lumber; Jones Bros Iron Works and Maywood Building Supply were among the sponsors. Freedom House and the B.R.A. threw open the doors of the Pilot House in early December to show residents first hand how an old house can be transformed and to get advice and information on how to do the same for their property. (Today the house is in fine condition. It is owned by Syvalia Hyman Jr., who has probably the only swimming pool in Roxbury.)

The largest housing development in Washington Park got underway when the Boston Redevelopment Authority announced in June of 1965 the plans for Warren Gardens. The development would be built on the 12 acres of Tract 1 along Warren Street from Dabney to Dale Streets or from the proposed Civic Center to the Washington Park Mall. Second in size only to Academy Homes II on the rocky ridge of Cobden Street, 225 units of housing and a commerical block was planned. Hugh Stubbins and Associates and Ashley Myer & Associates would be the architects of this significant and highly visible development.

The \$4.5 million mortgage would be financed in part by Charlesbank Homes, a Boston Charitable housing foundation. Warren Gardens was planned as replacement homes for dislocated residents from the widely demolished area between Dudley Street and Dale Street.

The land was steeped in history. In the 17th century it was the pasture land of John Eliot, minister of the Roxbury First Church. Warren St and Walnut Ave. are two of the oldest roads in Roxbury (laid out in 1665 and 1662 respectively) and where they merged was a large outcrop of puddingstone. In 1878, the wealthy dry goods merchant Isaac Fenno moved into his new mansion designed by Hartwell & Tilden on this rock. The mansion and the grounds, which stretched back to Rockland Street, were called Buena Vista. On the death of Mrs. Almira Fenno on May 19, 1925, she deeded the outcrop of

about 1 1/4 acres to the City of Boston as described in her will:

"This unique and elevated location shall be forever kept open, an object of of beauty, with it's rocks and trees, a bit of old Roxbury as used by the Apostle Eliot for pasture. I earnestly request the City of Boston to guard and pre-serve tis natural features as my former husband, Mr. Fenno, and myself have done for many years."

When the tract was acquired by the B. R. A. on Dec. 23, 1964, that agency paid \$19,500 to the City's Trust Fund, the holder of the Fenno will.

It was the opinion of the city law department that the Fenno trust was nullified by the urban renewal legislation of land takings by eminent domain. The suggestion was that the \$19,500 could be used to acquire another equally atractive and scenic location for the preservation of a bit of old Roxbury.

A Montessori School or nursery school were originally proposed for the rock, but these plans did not come to pass and the Urban Wild, as it was termed by B. R. A. landscape planners in 1975, has been well tended by the groundskeepers of the Warren Gardens Cooperative. The puddingstone foundation and boundary wall of the Fenno mansion can still be seen.

Buena Vista Street once cut though the site from Walnut Avenue to Warren Street, separating the old mansion grounds from St. Richard's church and the other houses built on the estate grounds.

The construction of Warren Gardens caused the temination of Buena Vista Street. It was made into a residential cul de sac and renamed St. Richard's Street. The Warren Street end now was a solid wall. This also had a bit of Roxbury history attached to it, this one more recent. On August 7, 1952, the intersection of Buena Vista St. and Warren St. was

dedicated in a well attended ceremony to the memory of Staff Sgt. Herbert C. Shoals. Sgt. Shoals was the first Roxbury boy killed in action during World War II; he was 21 and fell at St. Lo. His mother and sister lived nearby at 234 Warren St. and they were the guests of honor at the service.

Fifteen years later, the memorial was gone and the back wall of row housing filled in the intersection, an illustration of the question of who owns history.

Ninety homes, apartment blocks and other buildings were razed for Warren Gardens. These included the landmark Warren Building which faced the three corners of Warren, Regent and St. James Street, where the parking lot is today for the housing; the Roxbury Masonic Temple on Warren St. and St. Richard's Church. A victim too was the Joseph Warren statue erected in a large public ceremony on June 17, 1904. The memorial to the Revolutionary War hero, son of Roxbury and headmaster of the Roxbury Latin School, was the victim to the widening of Warren St. and the rebuilding of the street pattern which provided more access to the Warren Gardens housing.

At the time, the B. R. A. planned to reset the statue and pedestal in the plaza at the new Civic Center nearby. This proposal was apparently unknown to the new B. R. A. staffers in the White administration and they allowed this piece of public art, paid for by public subscription, to be removed in 1970 to the private grounds of the private school of Roxbury Latin in West Roxbury. The statue has recently been meticulously cleaned.

On September 30, 1965, Warren Gardens Inc. was formed as a cooperative under Section 221(D)(3) to develop the parcel and the land was sold to the co-operative by the B. R. A. on March 31, 1967 for \$25,000. The Provident Institute for Savings wrote the mortgage, guaranteed by the Federal Home Finance Agency, for \$4,369,000. Work began by the end of 1967 and the B. R. A. accepted the completed development on March 13, 1969.

Although not the last of the housing to be built within the urban renewal area, under the terms of Collins and Logue, Hinton Terrace and Westminster Court on Walnut Avenue were probably the most unique.

Hinton Terrace, opposite Abbotsford St. at the corner of Westminster, was designed by Associated Architects and Engineers in 1966. Fifteen, 2 story row houses set in a u-shaped around a parking area was planned by a group of Roxbury businessmen named Phalanx Inc. and, financed by the F.H.A. under section 220 of the Housing Act of 1954. (This section made available mortgage insurance for new or rehabilitated rental housing and sales). Completed in the summer of 1967, the row houses were occupied by early 1968.

Opposite Hinton Terrace, is the very tightly built complex designed by Carl Koch called Westminster Court. Completed in 1968, it was built on the 2 acre estate of Sarah Hersey. The building permit has not been located, so it is not known who the developer was but this appears to be a private project. It was not designated as a housing parcel in the renewal 1963 plan.

Westminster Court is nearly opposite the Ellis School. The development is completely self-contained; so private as to be almost a cloister.

The only public housing which the leadership of Freedom House and the various CURE Committees would ever listen to, was housing for the elderly. Demographics indicated that there was an increasing number of elderly — particularly Jewish men and women — in the Washington Park renewal area.

The first elderly housing apartment block built by the Boston Housing Authority predicated the Urban renewal plan. This was the 7 story Holgate Elderly Housing at 125 Elm Hill Avenue at Seaver Street overlooking Franklin Park. Designed by the East Boston

architect John Guarino in 1959, the building was underway in January of 1960. (It replaced a large private home which had been converted into the Herbert J. Wolf VFW Post for Jewish veterans).

The renewal plan specified two locations of elderly housing — one in the middle of the area at Martin Luther King Blvd. and Warren Street adjacent to the planned shopping mall, and the second near the former Egleston Square station on the MBTA.

The Boulevard Tower — originally called Warren Towers but today known as the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. Tower — was designed by Freeman and Flansberg in 1967. The 14 story building contained 104 units and was fully occupied on July 8, 1969.

In 1965, the B. R. A. proposed a Tower for elderly at Egleston Square on renewal site Da. This would be shared with site Db (both halves of the same whole) adjacent to the Egleston Square branch library. The concept was to mix family housing with elderly apartments in the same way that Charlame Homes and King Towers acted in the center of the renewal area. The architects for the distinctive "roundhouse", which is today the landmark of Egleston Square to be seen for miles around, was Isidore Richmond and Arnold Jacobson. Construction began in 1968 and the roundhouse was fully occupied on June 23, 1970.

The adjacent site was not developed as the B. R. A. planned however. In 1971, it became the location for an "instant housing project" under the Infill Housing Program. The acre and a half site was built up with 48 units of housing in three large blocks. They were never completed. They sat empty and vandalized for over 15 years until Urban Edge applied for one of the first Boston Housing Partnership grants under the administration of Mayor Ray Flynn in 1984. Financed and insured through H. U. D., the buildings were rehabilitated and fully occupied by June of 1987.

Parcel I-8, the last quarter of the Notre Dame Academy property had been scheduled as a public building or other unspecified public facility in the 1963 plan. This parcel included the grounds and the building of the Academy and it may have been the idea to reuse them as a social and recreation center to benefit Academy Homes residents. Nothing ever materialized, the building was ultimately razed, and the land sat vacant for nearly 25 years.

In 1982 the Council of Elders Housing Corporation acquired the property from the B.R.A. for a 19 story elderly housing apartment tower. Designed by Stull & Lee, architects, it opened in 1986. The grounds are nicely landscaped, but the land behind it where the Academy once stood is vacant and unimproved.

Spurred on by the renewal project, and certainly mindful of the advantageous financing available, Longwood Management Company acquired the former Nickerson Home for Children at 135 Townsend Street in 1965 as the site for a private recuperative center. Designed by Richmond and Paley, the 128 bed home was opened in the summer of 1968. It is one of the handsomest contemporary buildings in the renewal area, long and low and discreet with an air of repose and comfort about it.

#### IV.

Washington Park was planned, designed and built as a complete community which would include most of the services a residential district would need and which would attract people to live there. These included commercial districts, a civic center, recreational facilities, new and improved parks, healthcare services, schools and libraries.

In the 1963 plan there were sites for neighborhood businesses — the "mom and pop" variety store, corner drug store and beauty parlor — and one large central site designated for a shopping mall. In November, 1963 two relocation sites covering about 2 acres

were provided for small businesses displaced by urban renewal covering about 2 acres. One was on Humboldt Avenue between Townsend and Harrishof Streets. The second was on Walnut Avenue and Circuit Street, tucked beneath Warren Gardens and facing Warren Street. Another small commercial block was planned in Warren Gardens on Warren St. opposite Copeland Street.

Both Warren Gardens business sites were not built. The Walnut Avenue and Warren Avenue corner was graded and curbed but has been a neighborhood vegetable garden for over twenty years. Warren Gardens housing was built around the site for the commercial block on Warren Street. When the business building was not built, a "window" into the otherwise closed housing development was opened up. Warren Gardens is a solid wall of masonry from Walnut Avenue to Dale Street accept for that one "window" space.

The Humboldt Avenue business block was built at 95-101 Humboldt Avenue at Townsend Street. Designed by Associated Architects and Engineers in 1964, work began the next year and was completed in July 1967. It has contained a grocery and a pharmacy with offices on the second floor.

On October 31, 1969, groundbreaking was held for a new commercial building at 3000 Washington Street just north of Egleston Square between Westminster St. and Cobden Street. This was the 2-story beauty salon and beauty school of Mrs. Josephine Holly, who also acted as the developer of the site. (Jo Holly was the well known gossip and celebrity columnist for the Bay State Banner in the late 60's and early 70's with her weekly "HUB CAPS" feature). Financing for the La Pariessienne Academie School of Hair Design was provided by the newly chartered Unity Bank and Trust, the first black owned bank in Boston. The \$240,000 building was designed by Goody, Clancy and built by The Beacon Companies. (La Pariessienne has been a feature of Egleston Square for two decades, but

recently the building has been put up for sale).

The block where John Collins lived at Elmore St. and Washington St. was cleared of buildings in 1965 for a planned commercial block of local stores midway between Academy Homes and the St. Joseph Housing. This too did not materialize. In a renewal project which saw practically all of its goals for housing met, it had difficulty, it seemed, in attracting commercial investment.

The major shopping district in the renewal area was built. The Washington Park Mall was located in exactly the center of the area at the intersection of the crosstown boulevard and the main artery of Roxbury, Warren Street. Warren Street connected Grove Hall — the far southern corner of Roxbury — with Dudley Square. (It appears as if one is only minutes from Warren Street no matter where they are in Roxbury). The location was perfectly in keeping with the renewal goal of a self contained sub-urban community.

In the summer of 1963, the B.R.A. proposed a plan for a mall designed by the important Cambridge architects Cambridge Seven and financed by a major developer in shopping malls with the Purity Supreme chain.

That scenario seemed not to work well because by the day of groundbreaking in July, 1965, the players had switched. Instead, the 7 acre, \$1.5 million mall would be developed by the anchor store, Blair Foodlands. Blair had had a Roxbury food store in Dudley Square for years. The architects would be the minority owned and operated company of Associated Architects and Engineers (with Henry Boles and Paul Parks as architects in chief).

The grand opening ceremony was held on Sept. 29, 1966. A jubilant Otto Snowden declared: "This mall represents the largest business investment in this area in years. Now everyone can see what urban renewal is all about."

In addition to Blairs, the other anchor store would be Zayre's with Thom McCann Shoes filling one of the other shops. The Boston Five Cent Savings Bank at first proposed a branch bank in the mall, but this never occurred. When it began to be clear that the banks of Boston were not going to put any branch office in Roxbury, a group of black investors took a bold gamble and decided to begin their own bank. Not only that: they would turn to one of their own and build their own building. Groundbreaking ceremonies took place on March 31, 1968 for Unity Bank which Don Stull designed at 416 Warren Street in a lot opposite Townsend Street. (The site was at the time next to the path of the crosstown boulevard). With Lt. Governor Francis Sargent cutting the ribbon, the first black bank in the Commonwealth (much less Boston) was opened on June 27, 1968.

(Ironically, Unity Bank felt too isolated at that location and it moved to the Boston Five Cent Savings Bank Building at 2343 Washington Street opposite Dudley Terminal in 1979. Today the Bank is called The Boston Bank of Commerce.) The closest thing to a bank at the Washington Park mall was an automatic teller machine which the Shawmut Bank installed in 1990.

Light industry was provided for at two locations near the Civic Center. These were more rehabilitation or expansion projects rather than new investment by outside manufacturers (although the BRA did try to woo AVCO Industries). In 1965 International Manufacturing Company converted a brick garage into a light industrial plant at 2500 Washington Street. Nearby at 2430 Washington Street, Modern Electroplating Co. completed their new building in August 1968. This was originally a Railway Express Co. repair shop built in the spring of 1913. The wall backs up to the Civic Center plaza nearest the police station.

The depressed parking lot of the Washington Park mall, set well below the grade of

Warren Street at the corner of Dale Street became the home for the most recent new commercial building in Roxbury — a MacDonald's. It opened quietly in September 1990 after two years of vociferous opposition by the Dale Street community to block the construction of what it felt was only the breeder of trash and traffic. In a community which needs all the job opportunity it can get, those who work there may see the new MacDonald's in a different way. Painted in off white with lines suggesting a cape cod cottage, the MacDonald's architect tried to make the building as transparent as possible. Indeed, it is not set on Warren Street but rather deep inside the depressed grade of the parking lot facing Dale St.

If wealth were measured, as some would fervently believe that it should, in the acres of parkland and recreation grounds which a community has, then Roxbury would be Beverly Hills: Roxbury is rich in parks and recreational space. A deliberate and very early goal in the urban renewal plan was to increase the parkland and recreational space within the Washington Park area. In this regard the decision had a much wider impact on the surrounding communities because of the central location of Washington Park in the city as a whole. The pool, baseball court, skating rink, gymnasium, the YMCA and the Boys Club could be used by other communities such as Jamaica Plan, the Fenway, Dorchester and Mission Hill. All of the major new recreation facilities were placed either on the crosstown boulevard or its main north-south feeder road, Warren St. Access to these places from other communities was encouraged.

There was equal emphasis on neighborhood playgrounds too. The earliest new playground was designed by the landscape architects of the B.R.A. in 1963 at the corner of Walnut Park and Walnut Avenue. Completed during the summer of 1964, the tot lot was then turned over to the Parks Department.

Adjacent to the grounds of the David Ellis School (built in 1931), several homes

were demolished to build a 3 acre playground that would serve both the school and the neighborhood. A playground for younger children was built on Crawford Street nearly opposite Waumbec Street, while the existing school playground was regraded and seeded. A footway was built out to Abbottsford Street between two houses. Work was underway in 1965 and completed by the end of 1966. (It was completely rebuilt by the Parks Department in 1987).

A small sitting area opposite Bethel Baptist Church on St. James St. was built in 1967. Perched high on the edge of a rocky ridge and retaining wall that formerly was the line of houses on Cliff Street below, it was designed by B. R. A. staff landscape architects. They called it "Overlook Park" because of the views it afforded over Dudley Square and the downtown skyline. One of the earliest pocket parks in Boston, Overlook Park was caught in the usual problem in government of confusion of whose jurisdiction. The park has never been properly maintained and the view long blocked by a thick row of maple trees.

Rehabilitation was part of the improvement of open spaces as it was of housing. In 1966, Sasaki-Dawson designed \$53,000 worth of improvements for probably the finest small park (2.5 acres) in Boston, Horatio Harris Park. Sasaki-Dawson planned new walk ways, lighting, and an underground sprinkler system to water the regraded and seeded lawn an innovative play equipment of stylized concrete animals were placed in a hollow near the Monroe Street corner.

Although no doubt useful, there is nothing that any landscape gardener could do to improve on what nature provided at Harris Park. The lawn below Walnut Avenue appears to be the bowl from which the mythical Roxbury giant in Holm's poem scooped out the mass of rolling and jumbled rocky conglomerate that is the centerpiece of Harris Park.

When Horatio Harris subdivided his estate in 1889 he deliberately left this space

open as the splendid grounds to the magnificent block of row houses he had built facing the park on Harold Street. The Harris mansion faced the park from its setting on Har- rishof Street and the row houses — called Harriswood Crescent — faced the east side of the park. Designed by J. W. Beal (the architect of Charles Street AME Church and the Eliot Congregational Church), the distinctive brick, stone blocks of town houses with their Romanesque entrances and steeply pitched slate roofs was completed in October 1890.

In 1895, the street laying-out Department of the City of Boston turned to Frederick Law Olmsted to beautify the square, as the Boston Transcript reported on Sept. 19, 1895. The depression of the 1890's brought that to a halt until 1913 when the walks were laid out around the huge puddingstone outcrop, the lawn graded and corner entrances built. (In 1979, the Public Facilities Department pulled out the original puddingstone steps at the corner of Townsend and Walnut Avenue and replaced them with the present cast concrete stairs).

As part of the development of Marksdale Gardens and the new St. Mark's Congregational Church, a  $\frac{3}{4}$  acre public plaza was designed between the Bethel Pentacostal church (built in 1947), Townsend Street and the Roxbury Technical High School yard. It was designed and built by the Parks Department in 1968 with the advice of the congregation and the pastor of St. Marks Church. Like Walnut Avenue tot lot and the Trotter School playground, it was completely paved. The only grass is in a raised concrete bed around which are set benches nearest the Bethel Pentacostal church. At the corner of Townsend opposite St. Marks is a flagpole on steps with an open plaza behind it to a wall of lilacs and trees. The plaza was made, as the residents and the church leaders described it at the time, as a place of outdoor celebrations, concerts, art exhibits and a central gathering space. It was designed for that purpose but is has never been used that way. Indeed, when

a group of black artists chose to exhibit their work in the summer of 1968 (thus inaugurating the annual Art in the Park Sunday) it chose Horatio Harris Park and not the plaza to hold the exhibition and music fair. On the Deckard Street side of the Plaza, behind the Church, but accessible only from the plaza itself, a small tot lot was built.

This was also completely paved although fringed with shade trees. The placement is curious since it is so obscure from the main streets. The last thing parents want for their children to play in is an out of the way corner. At the time, however, it was no doubt thought that with the activity in the plaza, a quiet separate corner would be best for children.

When the plaza was completed it was named Laviscount Plaza in honor of Reverend Samuel Laviscount of St. Marks Church. A small plaque on the flag pole bears witness to the man.

Franklin Park was also improved during the Collins administration. Although not part of the urban renewal plan of the B. R. A., the Park nevertheless formed the solid southern boundary of the plan and was seen in 1960 as one of the main strengths of the Washington Park renewal area.

In 1961 the first children's playground was built for \$16,960 at the Humboldt Avenue Entrance on Seaver Street. This playground was close to the residential areas along Seaver Street opposite the Young Men's Hebrew Association (which used the park as their playground), and near to the Elephant House, Winter Bird House and Rose Garden of the Zoo. (In 1965, the tot lot would be repaired and renovated for the first time. The cost was \$24,000). On the other side of Franklin Park, two tennis courts were build for \$13,000 in 1964..

The pride of the Parks Department during the Collins years was the new golf course

clubhouse. Built originally in the fall of 1948, it was completely rebuilt in 1963 for \$62,470 drawn from the Parkman Fund. Mayor John Collins was an avid golfer at Franklin Park before he contacted polio, and he well remembered the rather cramped first clubhouse. No doubt to improve his chances for re-election, he unveiled the designs by W. Chester Browne for an enlarged clubhouse in July of 1963. A porch would be added, a spacious "19th hole" lounge and new locker rooms. It was completed in 1964. In 1966, the present golf course parking lot was built.

The golf course was named for William J. Devine after his death in 1967. Mr. Devine, who lived at 41 Orchard St. in Jamaica Plain, was appointed Parks Commissioner by Mayor Collins in April 1964.

Washington Park, the central park of the renewal area, was doubled in size to 20 acres by discontinuing Bainbridge and Kingsbury Streets and closing off Paulding Street by creating a parking area for both the school and the park.

This new space would be transformed into a Park Commissioners dream: opposite the Lewis School on the crest of old Honeysuckle Hill would be a new children's play area. Along Martin Luther King Boulevard would be stacked basketball courts, tennis courts and culminating at a complex of swimming pool and skating rink at Washington St. Fronting on Washington Street would be a gymnasium and social center and between that and the original hill of the Park, a new baseball and football field facing Dale Street. Indoor and outdoor four season sports and recreation spaces, all within 20 acres. Although laid out as a building site by 1966, all of it was completed after John Collins and Edward Logue left City Hall. The completion of the housing sites was — quite correctly — the first priority.

In 1966, the Massachusetts Legislature authorized the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC) a state agency, to take possession of a portion of Washington Park for con-

struction of a swimming pool and skating rink. The \$1.1 million complex was designed by M.D.C. staff architects in August 1967 after the B.R.A. transferred the property to the M.D.C.

In mid June 1968, community leader Melnea Cass dedicated the pool and rink which was named in her honor. The swimming pool was within site of Elmore Street where John Collins lived, but by June 1968, Mayor Collins was now Professor Collins.

In 1966 he ran in the Democratic primary for United States Senate. In what perhaps was seen as "just desserts" by the people in South Boston who remembered the upstart Irishman's defeat of John Powers, Collins was defeated in the primary by the Brahmin former Governor Endicott Peabody.

The defeat seemed to hit Collins hard. In a revealing statement after the primary, Collins' campaign manager was quoted as saying, "I'll be surprised if he runs again. There are too many problems in the city." Both statements were all too true. In June 1967, the largest vote getter in recent Boston politics declined to seek a third term as mayor.

Quite simply, he began to wonder whether it was all worth it, as Peter Lucas wrote in the Boston Herald at the time. There was the constant struggles with the state legislature, the city council and increasingly — as school desegregation became the looming Leviathan over Boston — the intransigent school committee. No doubt the recent riots in front of the Grove Hall welfare office, in which the increasing resentment of low income black residents were literally taken to the street of Blue Hill Ave., was very unsettling to the mayor who coined the term "planning with people." Front page photographs of white policemen clubbing black women was not the kind of press any mayor wants to see. For a son of Ward 12, it must have been doubly disheartening. Personally, he was 48 years old with a seriously ill wife and the economics of those factors certainly weighed in on the scales too.

On July 10, 1967, Howard W. Johnson, president of M. I. T. announced that Collins had been awarded the chair of Visiting Professor of Urban Affairs as part of the Joint Center for Urban Studies at M. I. T. and Harvard.

The one recreational facility Mayor Collins did get to see completed was the one he dedicated on May 16, 1965, the new YMCA on Martin Luther King Blvd. and Warren Street. It was designed by The Architects Collaborative and was built for \$750,000 by the YMCA of Boston.

The Architects Collaborative also designed what is the handsomest building in the entire urban renewal area — the long and low Boys Club. This was the first building built in the civic center site. The foundation was laid in November 1966 on where Cliff Street met Warren St. The exposed retaining wall and rock ridge of St. James St. formed the north edge of the building. Beneath the wall and below Overlook Park, was laid out a baseball field for the Clubhouse. The building was completed and opened in 1968. At that time the original Roxbury Boys Club on Roxbury Street near the Post Office was closed.

The Boys and Girls Clubs of Boston now owned two important buildings. The first clubhouse (built in 1914 and designed by Harold Field Kellogg) they hoped to sell to a developer. The building sat on the end of the proposed New Dudley Street which would be another feeder road from Dudley Square into the inner belt. The courthouse behind the clubhouse and the post office next door would be razed for the four lane street. The old courthouse was razed in 1974, the post office will be relocated by 1992 but the 1914 Boys Club Building remains an empty shell, burned by fire in Jan 1989.

In April 1970, work began on the remainder of Washington Park. In a joint venture with the Boston Parks Department, B. R. A. landscape architect Jerry Spencer designed

\$1 million in improvements: a combined football and softball field, tennis courts, basketball courts, a tot lot and a cook out picnic area was designed around the existing M. D. C. Pool and rink and the planned gymnasium and recreation center. In Feb. 1971, William Nelson Jacobs and Associates completed plans for the recreation center which soon got underway with the rest of the reconstruction of Washington Park. The new park facilities and the recreation building were completed by the end of 1972.

The recreation building was named in honor of John Shelbourne, a former all-American football star at Dartmouth College in the 1920's and youth director at the famed Robert Gould Shaw House, the settlement house for Boston's black community.

(In 1986, a group of black residents petitioned the Parks Department to rename Washington Park in honor of Malcolm X who had lived for a time on nearby Waumbeck Street. At the hearing called by the Department to discuss the issue, one reason given for the name change was the lack of black leaders commemorated in the city's parks and playgrounds. The Park Commissioner — the first black ever named to that position — had only to smile to himself. He knew John Shelbourne.)

While the Shelbourne Center was nearing completion, Governor Frank Sargent made an announcement in November 1972. I-95, the inner belt, would not be built. It was not in the best interests of Boston and after three years of study, he concluded it was not needed. With that announcement, Martin Luther King Boulevard became an overbuilt road; a four lane boulevard which ran only three blocks. That decision also came at the same time that the Washington Park urban renewal plan came to an end. The civic center was well underway and nearing completion; nothing else would be built in the Washington Park urban renewal area for fifteen years.

One significant site was designated for a health service center. The site chosen was

at the curve of the proposed cross town road before it turned to follow the line of Quincy Street to Columbia Road. The site was on Warren St. adjacent to the YMCA within an easy walk of the Elderly Tower, Marksdale Gardens, and Charlame Homes and a quick bus trip from Dudley Square. This would be the home of what would be the Roxbury Comprehensive Health Center (familiarly known as RoxComp). RoxComp grew out of the Roxbury Community Council, next to Freedom house the other major citizen's group in Roxbury during urban renewal. In 1966, they formed a Health Services Committee to develop a family health care facility. Out of that grew RoxComp which formally opened on June 23, 1970 in the Washington Park Mall.

In the two years, \$2 million had been raised to build on the designated parcel and in 1973 the PARC Team designed the New Rox Comp Building, a vast brick box sitting high above Warren Street at the corner of Townsend Street. Underway in the fall of 1973, it opened in 1975.

The Judge James Jackson Putnam Children's Center occupied a rambling old house behind Rox Comp and this house plus an adjacent lot was designated by the B.R.A. as the site for the new Children's Center. This never materialized and after the center went out of business, the building was taken by Women Inc. in 1986.

Women Inc. is a unique center which cares for and renews the lives of drug dependent women. Part of the therapy is that Women Inc. allows women who have children to keep them together while the woman lives at the house. (Ironically two decades earlier, the Urban Renewal committee flatly rejected a B.R.A. proposal to locate a women's drug treatment center within Middle Roxbury.)

Three schools were proposed for the urban renewal area: at the extreme southern end on Seaver Street and Harold St., in the center at Humboldt Avenue and Waumbeck

Street, and at the northern end on Alpine Street at Regent Street. Land was acquired and the property razed for the Alpine Street and Harold St. schools in 1964 and 1965.

However in 1965, the state legislature passed the Racial Imbalance Act which acknowledge and sought to address the growing segregation of city schools because the residential patterns were becoming increasingly segregated. In Roxbury, by 1965 the population was overwhelmingly black.

The School Committee would be responsible for planning, constructing and administering the schools, not the B.R.A. The B.R.A. could only prepare the sites as it would for any developer.

There was a definite need for a new elementary school in Washington Park in 1965 because three schools had been razed for housing lots. These three original schools were too small and needed to be replaced.

In this period, Freedom House moved into the area for which it would become better known and for which it will be remembered - education. Freedom House joined other education activists such as Ellen Jackson of Operation Exodus (which created the Metco program) to push the School Department into creating a magnet school in Middle Roxbury, a school so well administered that white students outside of the area would be attracted to it. The concept succeeded with the help of the School Committee members like Arthur Gartland.

In March 1967, the architectural firm of Drumme, Rosane and Anderson presented their plans for the \$3.1 million Humboldt Elementary School. Groundbreaking was in August, 1967.

The school site was created by discontinuing Holworthy and Hollander Streets as through streets to Humboldt Avenue. Where the Humboldt theatre used to stand, the

B. R. A. planned a school playground, which like the other new playgrounds in the urban renewal area is also solid concrete with wood play equipment. Opposite the playground was Pleasant Hill Baptist Church which opened in 1944, one of the earliest black churches in the Washington Park area.

Intransigent to the end and indicating the strains that were just on the horizon which would beset Roxbury and Boston throughout the next decade, the School Committee planned to name the school for Joseph Lee, former school committee president. Throughout the 1960's the School Committee showed an increasing if not embarrassing inability to notice the changes in peoples' moods and the way they wished to be treated by government. In few communities was this exhibited with more clarity than in what was become the Harlem of Boston, Roxbury. Rather than the simple, if not lazy, expedient of asking Freedom House and Operation Exodus for a name for the school, the Committee (100% white) chose one for them. The resulting commotion should have been expected. In mid December, 1967, the Committee agreed to name the first new school in Roxbury in 32 years after the black Boston journalist, newspaper editor and fighter of civil rights, William Monroe Trotter.

As the *Boston Herald* perspicaciously observed in an editorial on Dec. 21, 1967, the school had a deeper meaning:

The name was really the first step in a movement that cannot be ignored, the will of the black community for involvement in the running of their community."

Ellen Jackson put the matter even better

"You know where we stand."

This was a brilliant reversal of the well known slogan of School Committee chair

Louise Day Hicks. Not known for her empathy for Boston's growing black community, she was unable to understand how her condescending attitudes in public hearings created the feeling that Boston was inhospitable to minorities. Incredibly, in 1967, she was running for Mayor. Kevin White became Mayor-elect because Louise Day Hicks was his opponent. No one in Roxbury knew very much about White, but they all knew Louise. (And she never stopped. In Dec. 1974 as chairperson of the Ways and Means Committee of the City Council, Hicks refused to pass a \$900,000 appropriation for improvement for Franklin Park — then used almost exclusively by the black community. She was not quite convinced "whether the money would benefit all of the people of our city. In the case of Franklin Park our people (emphasis added) can't even go in to it").

The other two schools were never built and the land lay vacant for over 20 years. The Alpine Street site was razed in April of 1982. Twenty three years later, on Dec. 19, 1985, the B. R. A. designated Taylor Properties as developer of 46 condominiums on the 4 $\frac{3}{4}$  acre parcel, one of the largest buildable spaces in middle Roxbury.

Groundbreaking took place in 1987 which prompted one life long resident to exclaim "Nothing has happened in this neighborhood in 25 years".

Set out as row houses along Circuit Street by the architects Chisholm & Washington, Fountain Hill was completed in 1990. Financing was both public and private: The Neighborhood Housing Trust Fund of the City of Boston, the Mass. Housing Finance Agency and two banks, the Boston Five and the Blackstone Bank and Trust.

The Harold St. School site, which bordered the home of Ellen Jackson, lay vacant longer.

In October 1988 a development of row houses set on Harold, Hutchings and Homestead Street was completed and occupied. Designed by Richard Walwood for the Cruz Man-

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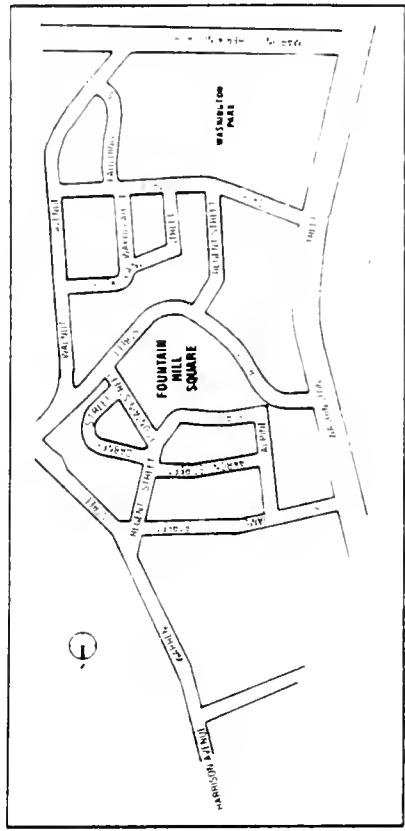
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	Square Feet	Pre-constr. Sales Prices
Two Bedroom Condominiums	1,118	\$133,000
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Two Family Townhouses:	2,268	\$190,000
Three Bedroom Owner Unit, plus One Bedroom Rental Unit		



The design of the Fountain Hill Square Development meets the changing demands for today's emerging lifestyles. We have created three excellent housing types that will add to the beauty of the Washington Park area: two bedroom condominiums, three bedroom condominiums, and two family townhouses. These large and spacious units contain many modern amenities, including kitchen appliances, decks and patios, cable TV connections, and more. Each unit has all new interior and exterior features. All private parking is off-street and to the rear of the new townhouses. A children's playground is located within the development.



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agement Company, it was landscaped by McCoy Landscape Company, the first landscape contractor in Boston owned and operated by a black businessman. The development is called Roxbury Hills Commons. The row house blocks on Hutchings Street set on the site of the handsome Williams School, an Italianate style brick building built in 1890.

The Washington Park renewal area is, as has been described, a triangle. The corners of the triangle form the three business districts of not only the renewal area but also of Roxbury, Egleston Square, Dudley Square, and Grove Hall. Schools were placed in three definite places within the districts - north, center and south. The libraries were placed at the three corners. The Egleston Square branch library was designed in 1952 and predated the plan for Washington Park. The renewal plan called for a new library at Grove Hall and at Dudley Square. The latter was to form a component in the Civic Center complex.

The Grove Hall branch library was built opposite Freedom House at the corner of Crawford St. and Warren St. within a few minutes walk of the Grove Hall business district. This location had been selected as long ago as 1955 by the planning board. Designed by Peter McLaughlin, the Grove Hall branch library was dedicated on December 11, 1970.

An interesting part of the library was that the first piece of public art in Washington Park was planned to be built on the grounds facing Warren St. The Cultural Affairs office of the City of Boston commissioned the 21 year old sculptor Fern Cunningham to design an 8 foot free standing cast concrete statue of mother and her children based on the song "Save the Children" by Marvin Gaye. "Save the Children" was unveiled on Nov. 18, 1971. Sadly, it was smashed by vandals on April 20, 1973 and the city inexplicably never commissioned a replacement by the artist. Only the pedestal remains to this day.

Mr. Cunningham was a teacher at the Elma Lewis School of Fine Arts. Miss Lewis, a life long resident of Boston, had emerged in the late 1960's as the guardian and inter-

preter of black culture and arts. In 1966, she persuaded the Boston Parks Department to allow her to put on summer theater in Franklin Park. Her first performance was Shakespeare's "Midsummer Night's Dream" on August 27, 1966. From this grew concerts and performances that ranged from The Boston Pops to Duke Ellington to Olatunsi. After several years of negotiation, the Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston deeded Temple Mishkan Tefila and its Hebrew School to the Elma Lewis School of Fine Arts in April, 1968. Despite considerable investment in philanthropic money, the Hebrew School building has been the only part of the synagogue to be used. It has been burned several times and has been closed since 1986. The Temple is an abandoned shell completely gutted of even the great marble pillars that held up the now leaking roof. Every remaining synagogue in Roxbury and Dorchester is used as a church by a black congregation or, in the case of Temple Hamidrash Aperion, as a social hall. Only Temple Mishkan Tefila is a derelict, gutted shell, as it has sat abandoned for 22 years overlooking Franklin Park.

Another building from Roxbury's past has had much greater success: the Museum of the National Center of Afro American Artists at 300 Walnut Avenue. This is the huge gothic villa of cut puddingstone and crowned by a peaked tower designed in 1872 by the Roxbury architect Alden Frink (of Elmore St.) Built for Aaron Davis Williams, son of an ancient Roxbury family who first arrived in 1634, Williams called his estate Abbottsford. In 1923 it became a public school and then the annex to the Ellis School eight years later.

In the Washington Park renewal plan Abbottsford was designated for institutional use. On Dec. 11, 1975, the Public Facilities Department, which was then holding the deed to the building, granted it to the National Center of Afro American Artists to be its museum. Barry Gaither has been the curator of the museum since its inception and has been very successful in renovating the interior into offices and exhibit spaces with a regu-

lar schedule of programs exhibits and public events.

On October 4, 1987, Gaither presided over the dedication of the second piece of public art in the Washington Park renewal area: an 8 foot black bronze head by sculptor John Wilson titled "Eternal Presence". The piece is set on a puddingstone outcrop at the edge of the building with the sweeping lawn of the estate grounds before it. The sculpture was, commissioned by the National Center and funded by private donations and the Mass. Council on the Arts & Humanities.

The largest single development in the renewal area was the Roxbury Civic Center, the symbolic seat of government at the apex of the triangle district.

A trapazoidal six acre site was acquired and cleared between 1964 to 1965. Kallman & McKinnell, the architects of the New City Hall, were hired in 1964 together with Hoyle, Dozan & Berry as consultants to prepared the master plan for the complex. It was to include three buildings: a new Roxbury District Court to replace the one on Dudley Street which was in the right of way of the New Dudley Street; a New Boston Police District Station to relocate the original Roxbury Station 9 & 10 on Columbus Avenue, which (at that time) was in the route of I-95; and a branch library.

The master plan set the three buildings in a rectangle within the trapazoid: the police station at the corner of Washington St. and Dudley Street, the courthouse designed as a triangle with one side facing the Boys' Club, and the library as a square at the corner of Warren St. and Dudley St.

Cutting the rectangle into two unequal portions was a long narrow corridor separating the courthouse from the other two buildings. This corridor lead to a raised plaza with gentle steps leading down to a second plaza on grade with Dudley Street. The courthouse and the Boys Club would share a parking lot. A second corridor, although much nar-

rower, separated the library from the police station. This led to municipal offices set in a wing of the library. The entrance to the city offices led off from the plaza. the highest plaza literally formed the grade of the original landform and the police station was built into the slope of the hill, hence the different levels of the two plazas.

The police station was the first component completed after construction began in 1968. In March of 1971, Police Division 2 moved into its new headquarters designed by Kallman & McKinnell, Hoyle Doran & Berry. This same team designed the traingular courthouse completed in 1975. The library was delayed by a debate between leaders in the Washington Park community and the Library Department over the type of library this building would be. The resident saw it as more of a center for the collection and teaching of black literature and culture.

In response to that an auditorium and classrooms were added to the design. The library was designed as a box and wrapped around it in a step-down shapes was a high lighted corridor, which connected the reading room to the auditorium, the municipal offices and classrooms. Kallman, McKinnel and Wood designed the final library plan and it opened on April 3, 1978.

The third piece of public art in the Washington Park renewal area was dedicated on December 10, 1989 outside the entrance to the courthouse. Set up on a narrow concrete partition originally designed as seating and a planter, Vusumuzi Madona designed a circular iron mask with two sweeping arcs at right angles to the edges called "The Judge". (Although the artist described this powerful piece of art as inspired by the masks of the

Dogon people of Africa, it nevertheless bears a striking resemblance to the ZIG VIII steel sculpture of the American Artist, David Smith, which the Museum of Fine Arts Boston acquired in 1970. Mr. Madona was an MFA student.)

Fifteen years after the groundbreaking ceremony at Academy Homes, the Washington Park renewal area was done.

## CHAPTER V

### **A Walk through The Washington Park Renewal Area**

Architecture speaks of how society sees itself. Architecture sends messages and impulses to the resident as well as to the passerby.

In 1976, Joseph Eldridge, writing in *Architecture Boston*, described the architecture of Washington Park as,

"Innovations in design, physical planning, and construction that met all available standards and received wide recognition... (it) reveals a new urban ideal that is only slowly becoming understood."

The "new urban ideal" of Washington Park was one in which the architecture responded to a city seen as threatening. Each housing development is a cluster of units which face inward towards each other with their back towards the street. In some cases walls of concrete blocks or wooden fencing lines the street and blocks every view of the housing. Much like the layout of Orchard Park, each cluster village can be easily sealed off from the outside world.

Academy Homes I at Columbus Avenue and Ritchie Street began the new urban ideal. The entrances to the apartments are not on Columbus Avenue — where only a narrow passageway tunnel connects the public street to the inner courtyard; instead all the life of the apartments, the doors and windows face inside artificially created courts built for the development. In a familiar pattern to be seen elsewhere in the renewal area, two solid walls of buildings form the edges of the public streets, Ritchie and Columbus Avenue. The two primary "gates" to the homes are Slayton Way and Weaver Way which come off Academy Road (the former entrance to Notre Dame Academy). Slayton Way is a cul de sac, Weaver Way is a winding drive with blind curves that block any connection to the community outside the village.

Academy II is somewhat different. It faces Washington Street and the doors to the apartments face the street, but the four story blocks are set back and protected from the street by parking lots. There is no physical connection between Academy I and II, although both are built on the same lot. Academy Road ingloriously dead ends in a pile of stones and weeds behind an apartment block of Academy II.

The two housing blocks are separated by an unkept lot of weeds and trees. This could be, with very little effort, a wonderful sitting area for the two housing complexes, as it was certainly intended.

Academy III is enormous, cold and intimidating. It looms high over Washington Street set back as far as possible on the ledge of the long puddingstone ridge. Two blocks of this part of Academy homes face Washington Street in a low scale, but again separated from the street by a parking lot. Small store fronts are built into one block (as they are also at Academy I on Columbus Avenue). The bulk of Academy III rises on precast slabs of concrete five stories above the edge of the rock. It is impenetrable from the street.

The only entrance to this enormous building is through a steep, narrow drive, no wider than 30 feet which comes off Townsend Street. After the slope is reached, there stretches before the visitor a blank parking lot and a wall of three story buildings. On the east side there is a huge outcrop of puddingstone which forms the foundation of Jewish Memorial Hospital and Dennison St. Once in that parking lot there is no other way out.

The doorways are narrow and confusing to locate because the buildings are constructed in prefabricated articulated ribbed panels of door frame, window and wall. Academy Homes III is designed in the architectural style termed modernist in the classroom. In reality it is the architecture of control, and the architecture of distrust of anyone outside of it.

The Academy Homes complexes were designed for the B. R. A. by Carl Koch. It is interesting to note what Koch designed for a private developer just a few blocks away on Cobden St. and Walnut Avenue. Called Westminster Court, it is a dramatic contrast to the Academy complexes, yet there are similarities. Westminster is a low rise set of attached blocks of apartments around a courtyard. These also used the prefabricated techniques pioneered at Academy Homes. The scale is far more welcoming than even the smallest of the Academy complexes on Weaver and Slayton Ways, yet it is just as paranoid of the outside world. There is no access to the apartments except from the parking lot which is set perpendicular to the street opposite the Ellis School. The homes do not face the street. Their backs do. The pleasant, shady interior courtyard is visible only to the residents, and no one else. As will be seen with Marksdale Gardens and Charlame Homes, Westminster Court is a private walled village with no relation or affinity with the street.

The one street created especially for the urban renewal area, and named in honor of America's preeminate soldier of freedom, Dr. Martin Luther King, was built as a cross town throughway, not as a grand allee through a proud community. Nothing says more about the lack of pride that city agencies have in the renewal area than the shabbiness of the edges of Martin Luther King Boulevard. The beginning at the very corner of Washington Street has been weed choked and unkept for twenty years. There even remains a flight of stairs through a boundary wall chipped and broken that once led to a long demolished house. The space between the edge of the MDC skating rink and Washington Street was never landscaped and has never been maintained. The same is true for the southern line of the boulevard between Walnut Avenue and Washington St. Shabby and overgrown, with four derelict abandoned infill buildings that have stood empty for fifteen years as an invitation to crime. No one in government has had the courage to assume the maintenance of

these areas. The Washington Park renewal area was begun to stop and eradicate blight, which is exactly what the city of Boston has condoned for fifteen years by allowing these shabby lots and those derelict buildings to remain. They are symbols of the vast change between the promises of 1960 and the benign neglect two decades later; the symbols - the difference between the planners and the managers of a city.

Martin Luther King Boulevard separates the housing developments of Charlame Park and Marksdale Gardens just east of Humboldt Avenue at the edge of Washington Park playground.

These are two of the handsomest cluster housing developments in the renewal area, yet they too are aloof and closed off from the surrounding community. A walk or a drive down King Boulevard east to Warren Street is to pass a wall of buildings turned sideways to the street. Marksdale Gardens on the southern side is set higher up on a ridge, far from the boulevard. Charlame Homes is set below the grade of the road. Fences of wood screen off the life that goes on inside them.

Interestingly, the tower for elderly at the end of the boulevard just before the mall, faces the street at the sidewalk in the usual way of towns and cities. It is the only residential building that acknowledges the street.

As a place to live, Charlame Homes is a quiet and charming cluster of low rise chalets with steep roofs, thick eaves and reset upper windows. The visitor doesn't live there, however; he is just walking through the neighborhood and he senses that Charlame Homes even from the public street is a private place. The center street winds through to a cul de sac at the Humboldt Avenue side; a brick wall separates the backs of the houses from the street at Humboldt and Warren; the attached row houses face inward towards each other in a literal island surrounded by Humboldt Avenue, Walnut Avenue and King Boulevard.

Charlame Park is somewhat different. It is set below the grade of the Boulevard and the house blocks turn their blank brick sides to it. It is somewhat more integrated into the preexisting older neighborhood around Dale Street. Charlame Park is a row of parallel brick boxes off a central street which ends behind the Washington Park Mall. The housing is of far simpler design than its relation at Charlame Homes.

Marksdale Gardens is in two segments. Both are cluster housing of attached town houses within their own villages. One comes off Hazelwood above the long abandoned playfield adjacent to the YMCA. These are low scale two story buildings of wood. They are not quite as aloof as Charlame Homes, but they still turn their backs to the public streets. They don't even face on to St. Marks Church, their benefactor.

The second portion of Marksdale Gardens is the nicest housing in the urban renewal area, tucked behind Harriswood Crescent off of Townsend Street. It is very private. The homes again turn their backs to the street and a wooden fence lines the edge of the sidewalk. The attached housing is grouped in irregular bunches around a winding street called Crestwood Park. This portion of Marksdale Gardens has the sense and feel of being in a shaded suburban community. Walking along Crestwood Park, the visitor is not in Boston, nor even in Roxbury. This was clearly the desired effect of the developers and architects and it succeeds. It succeeds largely because that end of Townsend St. and Harold and Monroe Streets are solid intact communities in themselves. Marksdale Gardens fits neatly into that feeling, although architecturally they are not of the same scale or style. They do form an intact streetscape from Horatio Harris Park looking along the edge of Harriswood Crescent to Humboldt Avenue.

St. Joseph's Church stands tall and proud on its rock and looks benevolently over the housing built in clusters around it between 1968 and 1973 along Washington Street

and Circuit Street.

Although built in clusters and with the same distance between themselves and the streets and the city around it, there is the feel of openness in St. Joseph's Housing. The housing built by the Archdiocese has not turned its back on the city as the other developments have. This is especially the case on Regent Street.

St. Joseph's Housing are two story attached row houses with steeply pitched roofs and high fire walls. Set in groups along Washington St., they face the street but are set back with parking areas in front. There is a sense of life along the main street here that is absent in many of the other developments. On the Regent Street side, the homes are grouped around a 1/4 acre community garden where the St. Joseph School forms one edge. This garden is a "temporary use" since the site was a development parcel on the 1963 plan. There is a sense, however, that temporary is permanent. Unlike Westminster Court's interior Garden with its austere, almost Chinese quality, closed off to any public view, St. Joseph's garden is open to anyone who happens to walk along Regent Street. The doors of the houses face the garden. There is more openness there than in any other development.

There is an interesting awareness also of Roxbury's history as illustrated in the street names: there is Fenwick Place in honor of the Bishop who established St. Joseph's parish, O'Bierne Court after the priest who built the English style country church in 1846, Hommagen court after Tommy Hommagen the freed slave for whom Tommy's Rock is named who lived on the site, and finally Crispus Attucks Way after the black Framingham resident who died in the Boston massacre of 1773. The name Crispus Attucks, like that of William Monroe Trotter, represents the emerging black consciousness growing along with the urban renewal area; Hommagen, O Bierne & Fenwick represents a respect for the past that is missing in the crumbling walls of Temple Mishkan Tefila.

Warren Gardens at the other end of Circuit Street is a very large and complex architectural pattern of row houses reminiscent of the London Council House communities in England. Warren Gardens is also opposite Fountain Hill and here can be seen the stark difference between the urban realities of 1968 and those of 1990.

Warren Gardens is an enormous complex laid out in two spaces — the edge of the drumlin of Fountain Hill and between Warren St. and Walnut Avenue as far south as Dale Street. It is the closest of the housing to the Civic Center and the business district, which it overlooks in part from Dabney Street.

At Fountain and Circuit Streets, the housing is built of cement blocks and wood in attached rows set in four concentric circles. Dabney Street cuts through the circles and creates a separate elevated set of row houses built on a circle above its neighbors. This circle is reached on foot from Fountain Street. The buildings are distinctive of light colors, high curtain fire walls and steep roof lines. All the buildings are 2 to 2½ stories. They are spare and stark against the sky as one walks up the slope of Dabney Street. Some houses face the corner of Walnut Ave. and Circuit Street, yet they are elevated above the sidewalk. This now forms a complimentary street pattern which is unusual in the layout of housing in Washington Park. Yet it is just that, unusual. Warren Gardens is as aloof and separate as the other developments with its back towards the public streets.

On Walnut Avenue at St. Richard's Street down to Rockland, the housing is set back and separated from the street by parking lots as St. Joseph's housing is on Washington Street. There are two inset courts of housing at Fenno and St. Richard's Street. Behind the courts is Kensington Park and the heart of Warren Gardens. Surrounded only by itself, facing itself with the backs toward the outside world, this segment is a sprawling maze of attached housing on separate grades. Narrow openings between the blocks provide access

within the private community, but only to the initiated. Once inside this world, the visitor is meet with calm and orderliness as at Marksdale Gardens behind Harriswood Crescent. Each row house has a tiny yard and the residents have planted fruit and flowering trees, flower beds and small patios. Plastic pink flamingoes are a favorite decoration in the yard which only emphasizes the intent to create a surburan world. It is pleasant, yet invisible to the outside world. For the entire length of Warren Street, one of Roxbury's most important thoroughfares, Warren Gardens is a solid wall of masonry hiding the back yards of the homes. It is one of the most distinctive streetscapes in the entire urban renewal area, like the huge fortress which looms up on its ridge of hock on Washington Street called Academy Homes III. The architecture of Warren Gardens wants to share nothing of itself with the rest of Roxbury.

The planners indicated their disregard for the rest of the community again at the very important corner intersection of Warren St., Regent Street and St. James. The handsome brick apartment block called The Warren once stood on that corner tall and proud with bays on each side of the intersection. The building and the street where once the Warren stppd were razed and in its place was placed parking lot. High above it, sits a row of housing with its back of concrete blocks turned against not only the parking lot but the center of Roxbury. The intersection is a barren one where the opportunity for something more important would have been siezed. At that corner is the transition place from the Civic Center to the residential communities of the new Washington Park. Like the grand old Warren Chambers racing out at the business district, a similar architectural statement should have been built here similar to the row of houses on Circuit St. and Walnut Avenue. (In fairness — although this cannot be documented as yet — the architects and planners may have had such a building in mind and the financing was not there to build it.)

The Dabney Street side of Warren Gardens opens out to the new Fountain Hill development which has just been completed. These attached row houses show that a different attitude towards the city, its customs and its people prevail today. These row houses are part of Roxbury; they face the street, they form the curve of Circuit Street, they invite the visitor to look at them. The parking is in back in open lots, completely the opposite of Warren Gardens. The materials of Fountain Hill are of wood and shingles similar to the surrounded older housing stock. Efforts were made to place Fountain Hill into the life of Roxbury not just into the land as Warren Gardens was done. The same is true for Roxbury Hills Commons on Harold, Hutchings and Homestead Streets. These buildings are familiar styles, and shapes. They face the street and form the streetscape with lawns and plantings. These are buildings which enjoy being where they are.

The Civic Center is a very dramatic statement of the way government saw itself and the way it wanted to portray itself to the citizens which elected it. The Civic Center is not proud or arrogant the way public buildings once were; the center is not dripping with ornament and detail with symbols of authority cut into stone or cast in metal. The Center is built at the entrance to Roxbury from Washington Street and Dudley Street and it speaks a language of brute power in the Architecture of Fear. These forms are afraid of the people in whose names they were built.

There are no great doors. Instead there are funnels such as at Orchard Park public housing. The doors to the police station and the library are almost hidden. They are flanked by high masonry walls which can be easily and quickly blocked to prevent escape. These are not inviting entrances to welcome the public.

The police station is squat and low whose only windows are in a strip at the roofline. The building is a bunker.

The library is not much different. It is a solid masonry block without a single opening except two tiny red doors. The light is let in by curtain walls of glass brick, a very ingenious plan which makes the building feel less heavy and bulky. Yet like the walls of Warren Gardens and Charlame Homes, this glass brick wall turn its back on the city too. Inside the library is spacious, bright, warm and completely and entirely a space for the public to use and feel at home in. The glass bricks provide bright eastern light and keeps the large open reading room warm. The bright and warmth are on the inside of that public building, however, outside it is bleak.

The Courthouse was built as a triangle with the apex closest to Warren St. mashed in to form a flat front. Built of brick, this is the entrance with a tint red door. The longest sides face the library and the Boys Club. These are walls of actual windows, much like any office building would have. But they do not face the public street, but at the controlled spaces.

The main public space in the civic center is a long open axis between the courthouse and the library. Designed as a plaza to connect the buildings together with the public streets, it is cold, windswept and usually lifeless. It is nothing but a shaft for light and air for the courthouse. It is not a ceremonial space; but then there is nothing ceremonial about the Civic Center. It has no pride. It is only a place to go to when you have to and then quickly leave. This apparently was the way the city itself was perceived a generation ago.

The planners did attempt to soften the brutality of the architecture by creating a public promenade between the police station and library and the public street. Trees were planted and benches were added, but it has been plagued by poor maintenance for so long

that no one lingers there. Part of the promenade was taken over as additional police department parking lot four years ago.

Public buildings too have changed in recent years as architects and planners face the city with a more positive attitude. The new police station in Mattapan at the corner of Morton and Blue Hill Avenue, opened in 1988, is a good example. Built of brick, it carries the curve of the corner with dignity and openness. Its entrance is flanked by a raised porch on the corner of the building at Morton and Blue Hill Avenue. The new police station has windows like any other office building. It was from the minute it was completed, a physical part of that community. This is the one thing the civic center is not. The Civic Center is there to rule the community and go home (beyond Roxbury) at 5 pm, exactly the way new City Hall in the placeless Government Center was designed and built at the same time (by the same architects). It is a disheartening fact that a community with so much pride and enthusiasm has as its largest complex of buildings an amorphous space built ostensibly to serve the residents but in architectural forms which speak of fear and control of them.

## CHAPTER VI

### Epilogue

#### I.

What was promised in 1963 was done. By 1975 with the completion of the Civic Center the urban renewal plan had been substantially completed. The Boston Redevelopment Authority did what it said it would do and did it in a timely manner.

In that twelve year period, \$70.4 million was invested in Washington Park, of which \$31.3 million came from the federal government. Eleven housing developments had been built with a total of 1,943 apartments or townhouses fully occupied. The B.R.A. estimated in 1978 that 2600 families had been relocated within the renewal area.

The biggest triumph of all was the wealth of public facilities built in that period of time: one public school, two libraries, a boys club and a YMCA, a skating rink and swimming pool, gymnasium and recreation center and one of the first neighborhood health centers in Boston.

No other part of Boston could claim that.

#### II.

It is essential to understand that the Washington Park Renewal Area was designed and executed by the chief planning and development agency of the city, the B.R.A. It had no jurisdiction over and could not possibly control the budget allocations, the priorities, the personnel deployment or the attitudes of the various other city departments whose responsibility were for streets and sidewalks, parks and playgrounds, education or public safety.

The activity and dynamic forces of change in cities goes on all around a planning agency. These forces did not spare Washington Park. There was a moratorium on the construction of new schools imposed by the Federal government while it decided the case of

alleged school segregation in Boston during the latter years of the renewal project. This had an impact on the plan over which the B.R.A. had no control and could not have foreseen. The sites for the proposed Alpine and Harold St. schools sat as rubble filled, overgrown lots for twenty years. The successor to John Collins did nothing about them for the 16 years he was in office. This indicated the increasingly polarized atmosphere between government and the residents as the 1960's closed. In 1963 government promised that its responsibility was to end blight in Roxbury. In 1973, government condoned blight and added to it by failing to complete the renewal project and reducing basic maintenance to the renewal area. Government refused to take any action on the quality of education in Boston before that solution was imposed by the desegregation orders from a federal judge in 1974.

The most visible agents of government are the police whose ostensible job is to protect the public. Their actions during the welfare mothers' demonstration in June of 1967 and after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., when widespread looting and rioting occurred from Grove Hall to Dudley Square, also polarized the atmosphere between government and the residents. The police were afraid of the community now.

The maintenance of the parks and squares and streets in the Washington Park renewal area grew from notoriously lax and sloppy to nonexistent as city agencies felt that their budgets were not sufficient enough to provide adequate services to the newly renewed community. Dudley Square was rarely even swept of litter.

There was also the inevitable chaos of renewal itself and its resulting impact on the homeowners and renters. As Langley Keyes pointed out, those who had supported renewal were overwhelmed by the demolition and disruption which went on year after year. These people left the community and were replaced by newer residents who had no understand-

ing of the urban renewal planning process, no stake in its success and without an income necessary to mainain their home or apartment.

Maintenance of the new housing developments became a burden on the newly formed cooperativaes which discovered that financing for construction was easier than building up a reservoir of funds for basic maintenance and repair.

The disruption of businesses and the flight of many families after and as a result of the 1968 street riots, depleted the urban renewal area even more. The 1975 school desegregation crisis stuck the weakened community with another body blow.

Made by planners, Washington Park now had to exist on the political whims of government and its city agencies which could often be arrogant and elusive. Throughout the long winter that was the decade of the 1970's, the Washington Park Renewal Area found itself nearly overpowered by the inertia and manipulation of government and increasing poverty on the edges especially at Mt. Pleasant, Grove Hall and along Blue Hill Avenue.

Far worse than all of that, however, was the fact that for the first time in nearly three and half centuries Roxbury was not seen as an integral part of the City of Boston. Roxbury was seen by government and by many of its own leaders as a race. Nowhere was that emphasized more than during the Bicentennial of Boston in 1975-1976. Roxbury played a major role in the American Revolution, as any Boston history book will explain. Yet Roxbury was virtually ignored furing the Bicentennial which focused overwhelmingly on the downtown. The Bicentennial ignored Boston's own history. There were a series of pamphlets produced at the time called The Neighborhood History Series. Roxbury is not included in that series although it is, was and has been a neighborhood of Boston. To the leaders in Roxbury who worked with the City's Bicentennial Commission on the Neighborhood History Series, Roxbury was a race and so there is one pamphlet called "Black

Bostonia." (There is not a 'Hibernian Bostonia' however).

This is a serious problem for Washington Park because it was planned and conceived as an integral part of Boston thirty years ago. The fortunes and the future of Washington Park are the concerns of all Boston residents. The Washington Park renewal era is but one more step in Roxbury's history.

To walk through the Washington Park renewal area today is to walk through a clean, intact and pleasant community. The edge along Washington Street and King Boulevard and upper Humboldt Avenue are jagged and frayed, but the community as a whole is not. Whatever the public safety and social problems which plague it, these problems are those of Boston as a whole and not at all dissimilar to other cities in America. It is the responsibility of government to address these problems, not the planning agency. Washington Park is intact and its housing developments for the most part are pleasant places to live in. Only Academy Homes seems to be beset with social problems that are not present at Marksdale or Warren Gardens. These too are part of the dynamics of city life and deserve the care of city and state government.

The urban renewal area was built by the spirit of its people more than anything else. That spirit has also sustained it through the indifference of government, the lack of concern of Boston residents beyond Roxbury, as well as the anger of some black leaders. Unconcern, indifference and anger did not create Washington Park. The spirit of the people who lived there made it and that spirit will see their community returned to its rightful place of pride within the City of Boston. It is so pronounced in stone: High above Elm Hill Avenue, cut into the limestone entablature of Temple Mishkan Tefila are the words "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit".

Richard Heath

November 13, 1990

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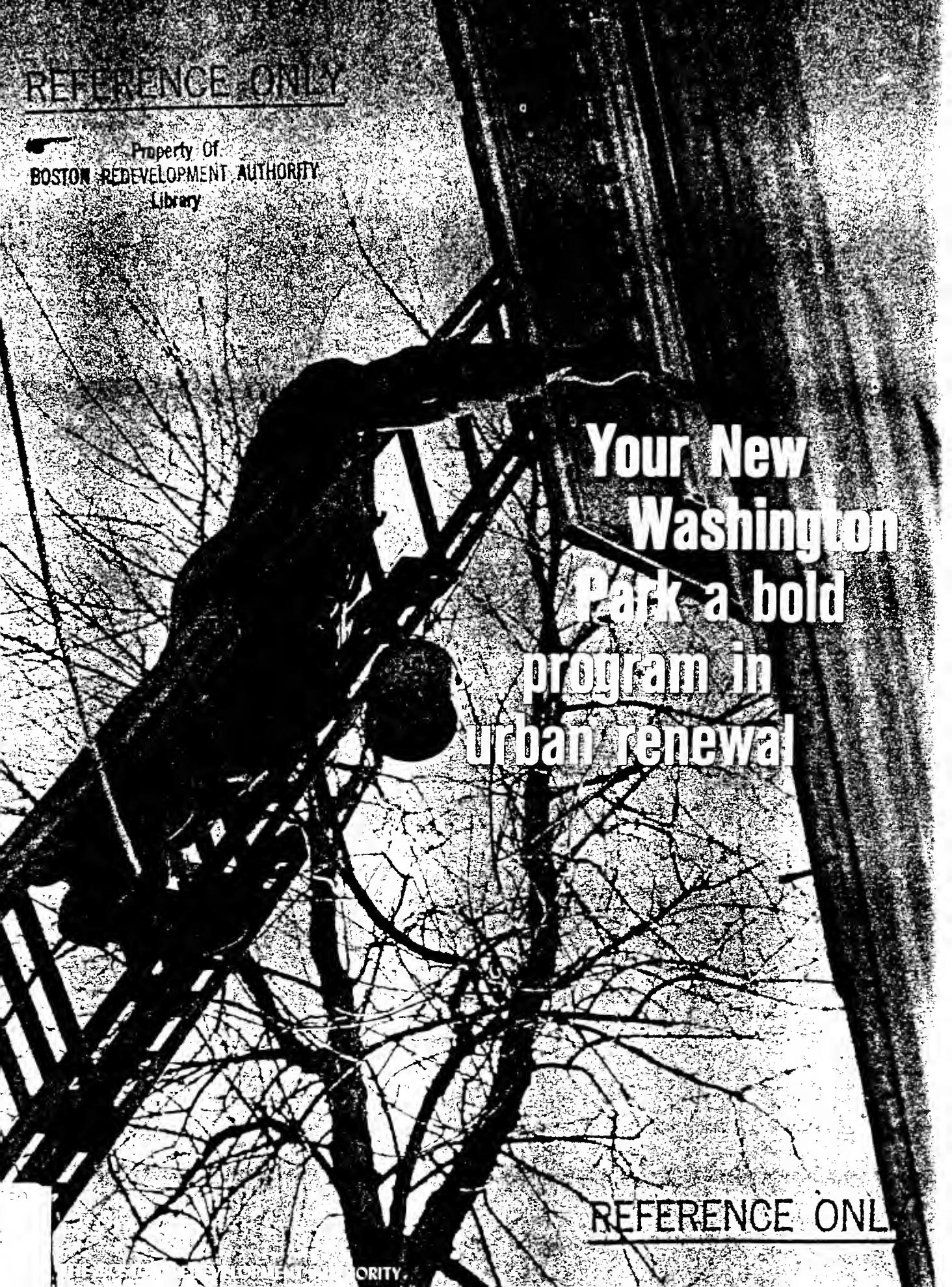
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Your New  
Washington  
Park a bold  
program in  
urban renewal

REFERENCE ONLY



# REFERENCE ONLY



It gives me great pride and pleasure to introduce this plan for your new Washington Park Neighborhood.

This is a plan that is the product of two years of give-and-take between the residents of the area and the staff members of the BRA. In this planning process — planning with people in the fullest sense of the word — the emphasis has been on conservation rather than demolition.

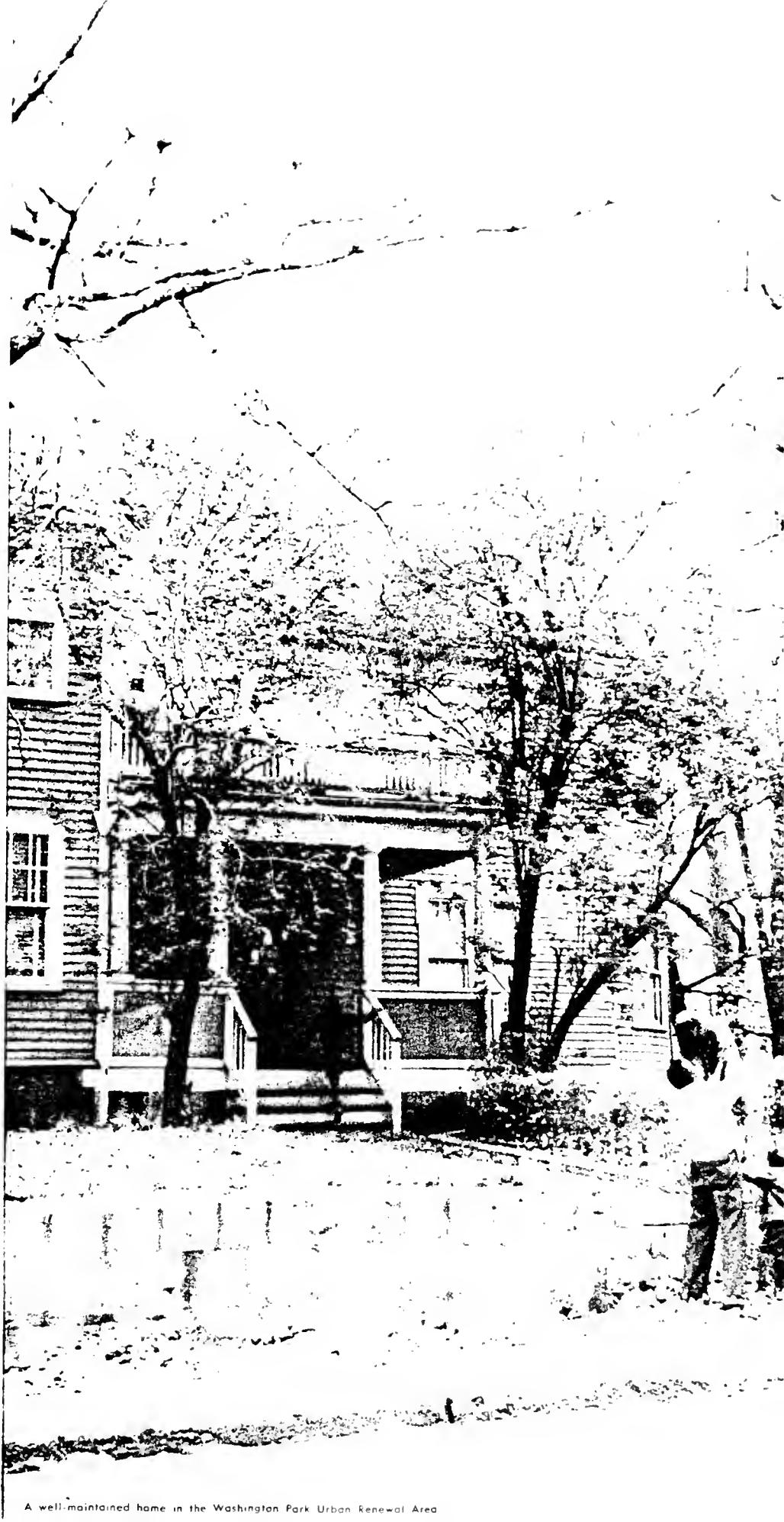
The key to this plan is that the overwhelming majority of existing buildings in the area will be saved through repair and rehabilitation over a four to five year period.

Such private rehabilitation in your neighborhood will be aided by long-term FHA-guaranteed home improvement loans available to homeowners in an urban renewal area.

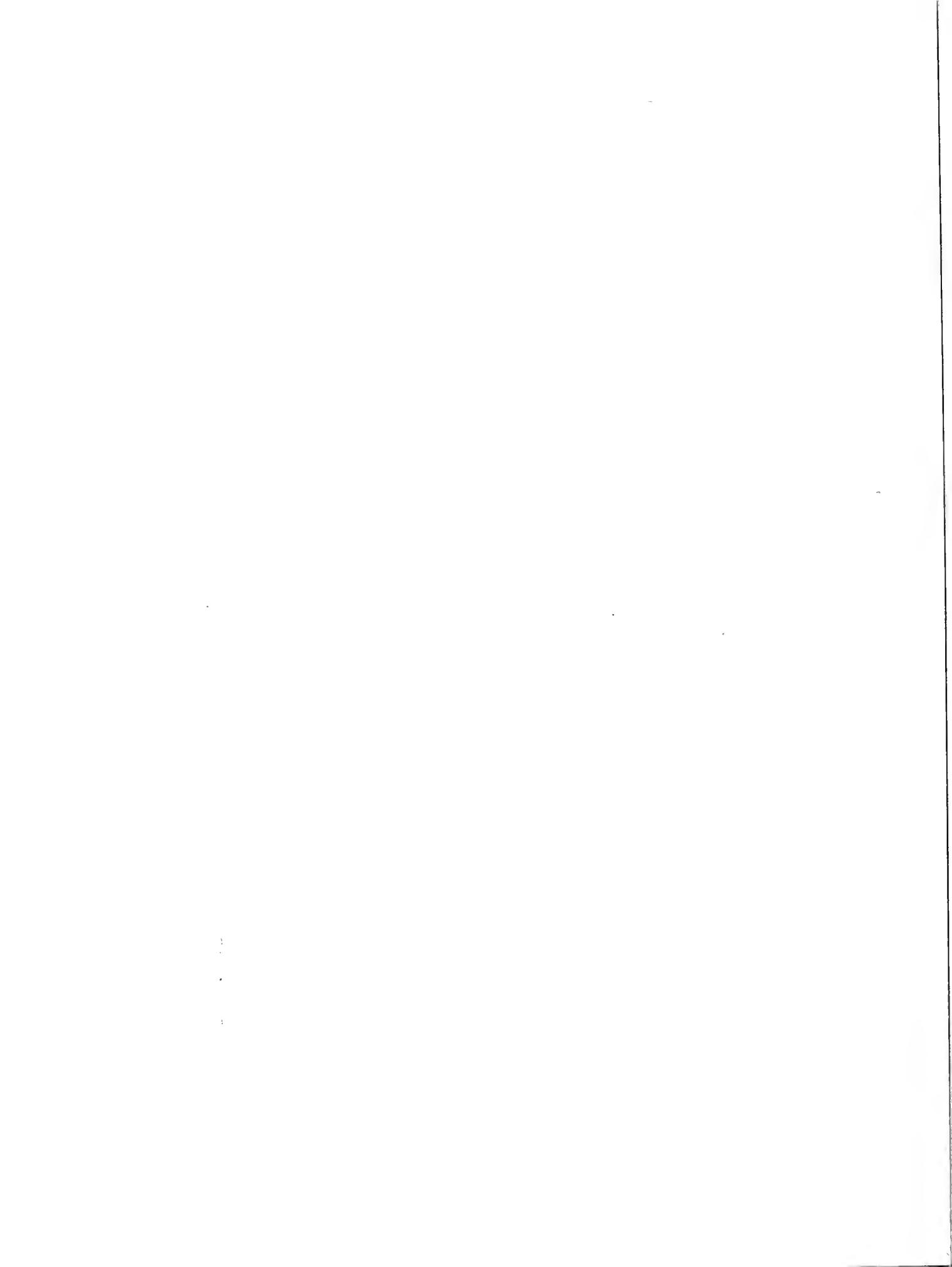
New housing, schools, parks, playgrounds, libraries and other improvements will also help restore Washington Park as a good, sound neighborhood in a revitalized Boston.

I have faith that you will continue to participate in this exciting opportunity to remake our community.

JOHN F. COLLINS, Mayor



A well-maintained home in the Washington Park Urban Renewal Area





Residents of urban renewal area and BRA staff discuss plan proposals

## Washington Park will be a better neighborhood in a better Boston

The Washington Park Neighborhood is that section of Roxbury which extends from Dudley Square down to Franklin Park. It has been called one of Boston's "middle-aged" neighborhoods because most of its buildings date from before the turn of the century. In fact, except for some apartment buildings, there has been little residential construction here since World War I.

When originally laid out, this particular neighborhood was a very desirable address - and still boasts many pleasant residential streets and many homes which are as good as any in the city. However, some sections have not been so well maintained and these sections pose a serious threat to the community as a whole.

The worst housing and environment is found along Bower Street between Humboldt Avenue and Warren Street. Around the northern boundary of this area near Dudley Square is another rundown section of mixed residential and commercial use that is today blighted and could tomorrow be a slum. There are also badly blighted strips along Warren Street and underneath the El on Washington Street.

Such blighted buildings and groups of buildings in this neighborhood are largely to blame for the growing number of fires which since 1950 have snuffed out the lives of 22 men, women, and children. They are breeding grounds for rats and for many diseases including tuberculosis. It is no exaggeration to state that bad housing — together with such accompanying conditions as over-crowded, obsolete, and inadequate schools, and lack of adequate recreational facilities — is also directly associated with an alarming increase in juvenile delinquency.

In a spontaneous attempt to cope with such problems as poor housing and delinquency, citizens' groups began to organize at the end of World War II. Some of these groups were short-lived. In 1949, however, Freedom House was founded as a civic and cultural center for the entire neighborhood. A few years later, Freedom House set up the first street improvement group in the Washington Park Neighborhood. This was called the Munroe Street Block Association and was the forerunner of 27 such groups which were organized by 1959.

Other citizens' groups were also active. On a district-wide scale the need for an organization that would provide a clearing house on community problems and serve to encourage cooperative action among business, educational, religious, governmental, civic and welfare segments of the entire Roxbury area led in 1954 to the formation of the Roxbury Community Council. In 1955, in turn, the Roxbury Community Council helped organize the Warren Neighborhood Association.

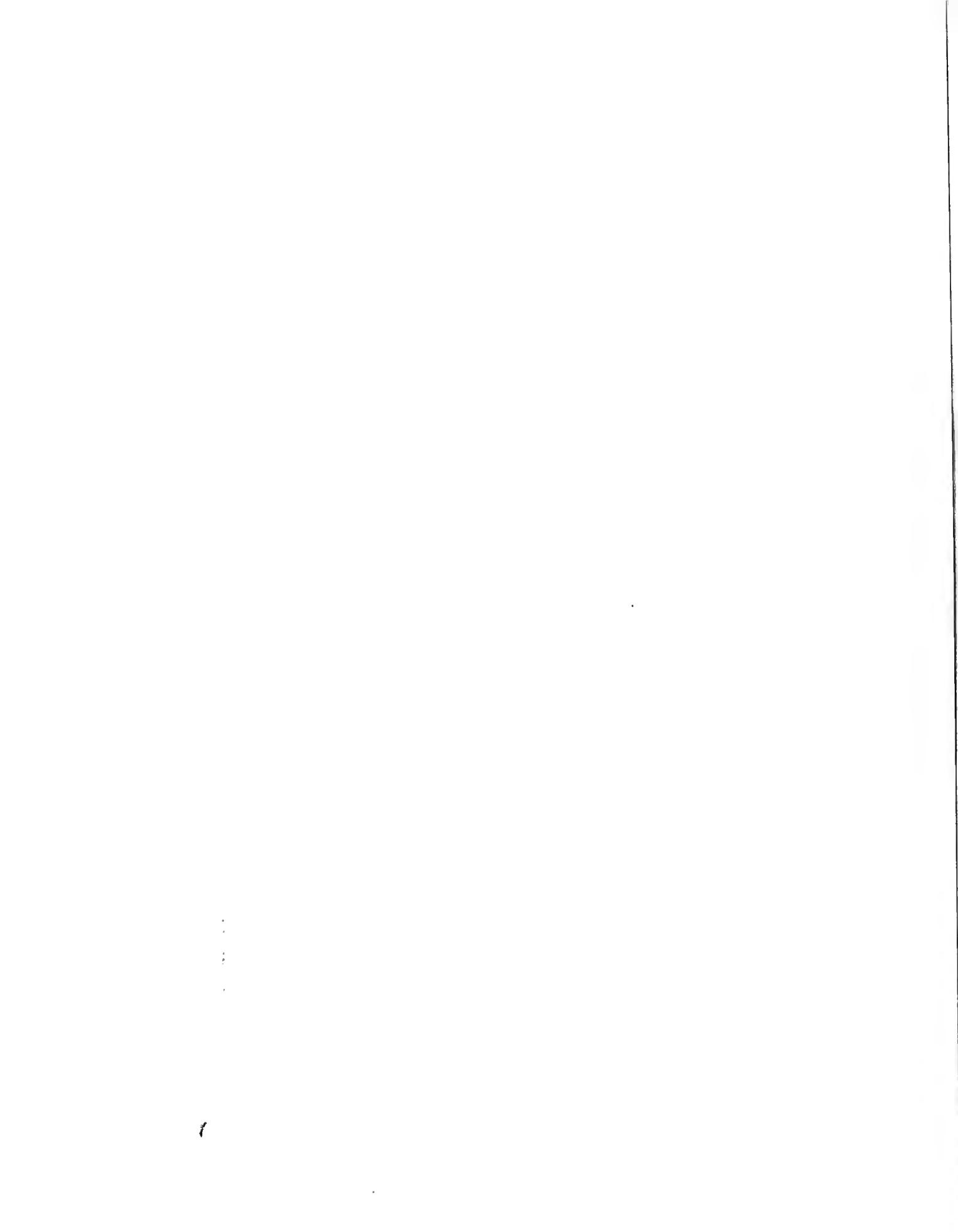
All of these grass-roots groups made self-help efforts to upgrade this neighborhood through programs and projects that included clean-up campaigns, property improvement, how-to-do-it rehabilitation demonstrations, tree planting, petitions for better schools and more playgrounds.

By the end of 1959, however, many residents were beginning to ask themselves how their unaided efforts could possibly be effective without some sort of overall planning, not only for Roxbury, but for the city as a whole.

This was the situation in September of 1960 when Mayor Collins made an historic announcement. Challenging all of the citizens of Boston to work together for the future of their city, the Mayor laid down the framework of a bold, \$90-million city-wide renewal program.

In this program Washington Park will be one of the first neighborhoods to undergo residential rehabilitation.

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Rehabilitation work going forward in Washington Park

## The emphasis will be on restoration and repair



member reviews plans with property owner

In announcing his program for the renewal of Boston, Mayor Collins asked that neighborhoods be planned on a partnership basis by people living in those neighborhoods and Boston Redevelopment Authority personnel. This has been the actual case during the planning for Washington Park. In this neighborhood, the Washington Park Steering Committee first provided an organization uniting block groups, neighborhood associations and influential citizens in an urban renewal planning team. This Committee has formed the core of even broader citizen participation in the new Citizens' Urban Renewal Action Committee (CURAC).

In hundreds of meetings between these groups and staff members of the BRA, there has been an open exchange of ideas and information. These meetings have helped provide a sounding board for planning proposals, and residents have made many suggestions that have been developed into definite features of the plan.

Here are the major features of the plan for the renewal and restoration of the Washington Park Neighborhood.

Residential rehabilitation in Washington Park means a program in which the emphasis is on neighborhood conservation and on the repair and rehabilitation of existing buildings. Exhaustive surveys in this neighborhood have shown that the overwhelming majority of buildings can be repaired and restored. Six out of ten of these buildings need no repair or only minor repair to bring them up to City Code standards. The remaining four out of ten, while needing extensive repair, can be rehabilitated.

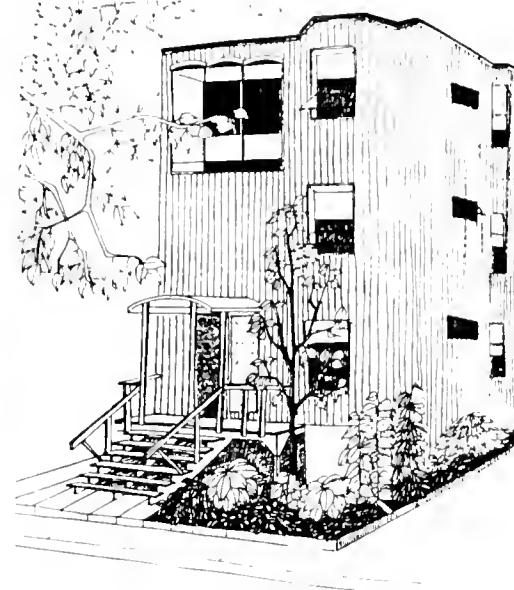
Most of these buildings are residential. Many are old but they are solidly built and it would be quite costly to build homes like them today.

To bring these hundreds of homes up to standard — to give them a new lease on life and years of additional service — will be the number one aim of renewal in this neighborhood.





dwelling before rehabilitation



Typical dwelling after rehabilitation

## PROPERLY THE BRA URGES

### IMPROVEMENT WILL BE SERIOUSLY ENCOURAGED

If a homeowner wants to improve his property, BRA members will assist in estimating the cost of needed and useful improvements. Technical guidance in design, construction, and the financing of improvements will be available.

### BS STAND READY TO LOAN FUNDS

It is estimated that about \$5-million will be spent by homeowners in the Washington Park Neighborhood to upgrade their property. In the past, mortgage money to finance such repairs has not been readily available in this neighborhood. However, to facilitate the flow of mortgage money for remodeling and repairs, the savings banks of Boston have pledged to Mayor Collins that an initial \$20-million will be available for rehabilitation purposes in neighborhoods like Washington Park.

### AL MORTGAGE ASSISTANCE BE AVAILABLE

Approvals of the renewal plan will also be available special mortgage assistance. Under 220 of the National Housing Act, the BRA provides mortgage insurance for financing rehabilitation on liberal terms of existing housing. The property owner will also benefit greatly from the neighborhood improvements which will stabilize and enhance property values and protect them over the long run.

### CLEARANCE WILL BE HELD TO A MINIMUM

If Washington Park is to be permanently improved, rehabilitation and repair of a major portion of its buildings will not be enough. Substandard buildings will have to be torn down to provide a fresh start for this neighborhood and a new environment for the people who live here. This will also provide sites for new housing, schools, parks, playgrounds and other badly needed public facilities.

### PROPERTIES WILL BE ACQUIRED AT FAIR MARKET VALUE

The BRA will pay fair market value for property which must be acquired. This amount is established by two independent appraisals made by two professional appraisers. If the homeowner feels his property is worth more, he has the right of appeal to the courts. Experience has shown that the BRA and the property owner are able to agree on a price in 80% of the cases without going to court.

### BRA WILL HELP FIND STANDARD HOMES, PAY MOVING ALLOWANCES

The BRA will help all families and individuals who must be relocated to find decent, safe, and sanitary housing into which they can move. The BRA will also pay moving allowances up to a limit of \$200. Special relocation benefits will be extended to businesses.

### RELOCATION WILL BE GRADUAL

Such relocation as is necessary will be carried out gradually to minimize hardship and ensure that relocation housing is available. Such housing will be housing for sale or rent. The Boston Housing Authority has given a firm commitment that displaced families who are eligible and who desire public housing will be given first priority for admission as vacancies become available.

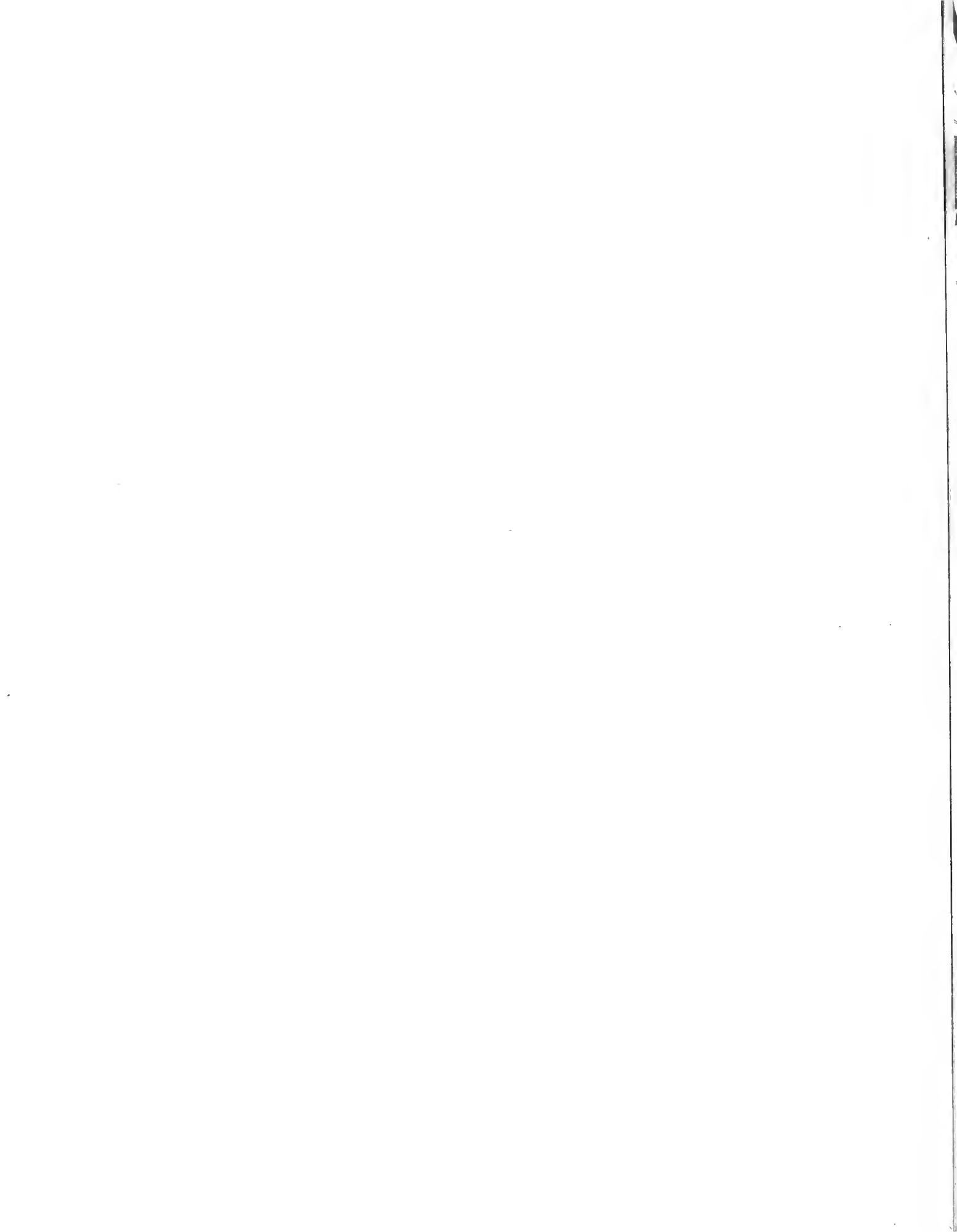
### WHAT THE PLAN WILL COST

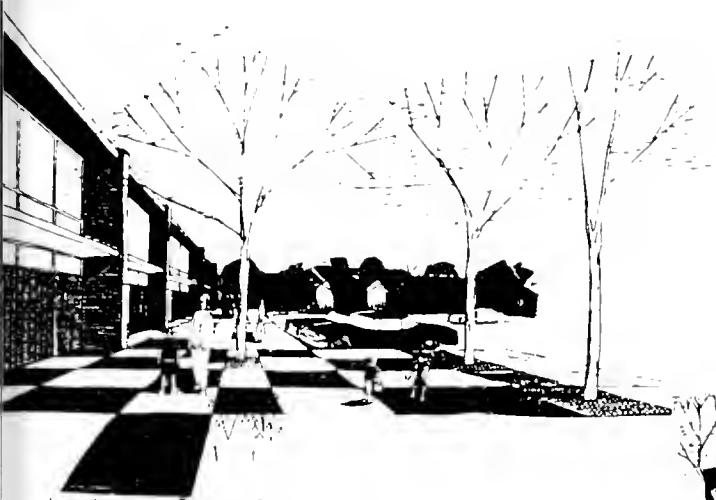
The new schools, libraries, parks, playgrounds, community centers and other badly-needed improvements in Washington Park will be paid for out of public funds. The overall cost will be about \$28-million. The Federal government will pay about \$16.5-million of this amount. This will provide for rehabilitation services, relocation, site clearance and demolition, and the installation of such facilities as better street lighting and new street paving.

### MANY FAMILIES WILL BE ELIGIBLE TO BUY HOMES

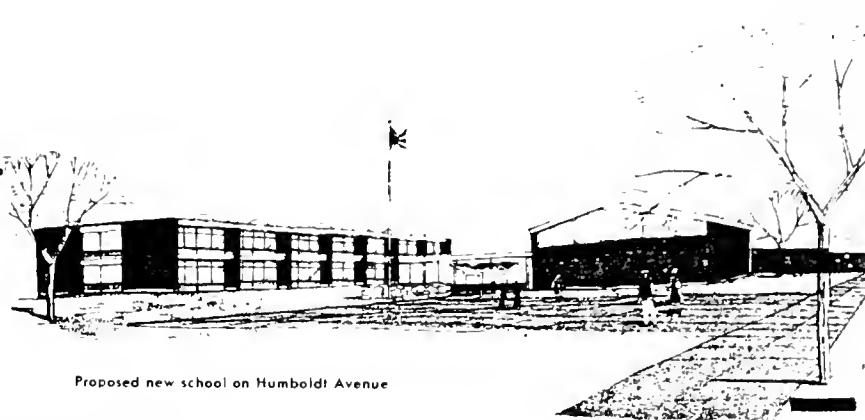
Because the Federal government realizes that families displaced by urban renewal may face some hardship, the law provides that eligible displaced families may buy a single family home costing up to \$14,500 with no down payment except a small closing cost of \$200. If the buyer does not have the \$200 at the outset, the seller may arrange for deferred payment on a short-term basis. The mortgage on such properties will be for up to forty years.

A substantial number of those displaced by urban renewal in this neighborhood will be able to buy homes through this program. An increase in homeownership will add new strength to the restored Washington Park Neighborhood.





Proposed new housing on Townsend Street



Proposed new school on Humboldt Avenue

## millions will be spent for improvement

### NEW PRIVATE HOUSING

Approximately 1500 units of new housing in attractive modern design will be built throughout the area and on the Notre Dame Academy grounds. These new homes and apartments for rent or sale will be of the row, garden, and duplex type and will provide off-street parking and ample outdoor play-space for children.

- at least 450 new units on the Notre Dame Academy grounds.
- at least 150 new units in the vicinity of St. Richard's Church, around the intersection of Walnut Avenue and Warren Street.
- 70 new units on Townsend Street between Humboldt Avenue and Harold Street.
- at least 100 new units at Ottawa and Bower Streets, between the new shopping center and Humboldt Avenue.
- 100 units of new housing for the elderly on Columbus Avenue near Egleston Square.
- approximately 150 new units on Codman Park off Washington Street.
- approximately 100 new units between Munroe Street and the new crosstown boulevard along Humboldt Avenue.
- approximately 170 new units along Washington Street near Dale Street.
- approximately 210 additional new units on small sites in the area which will be provided by clearing dilapidated buildings.

### NEW PUBLIC HOUSING

Some of these units might consist of public housing for low-income families and the elderly. They could be dispersed throughout the neighborhood and would be in garden apartments and row houses. The number in one location would be small.

### NEW SCHOOLS

Of the five public elementary schools in this neighborhood, only two are fire resistant. Moreover, the Howe School is 94 years old, the Williams School is 70 years old, and the Boardman School is 62 years old. To replace these overcrowded and obsolete schools, three new elementary schools will be built and Lewis Junior High School will be converted to an elementary school and modernized.

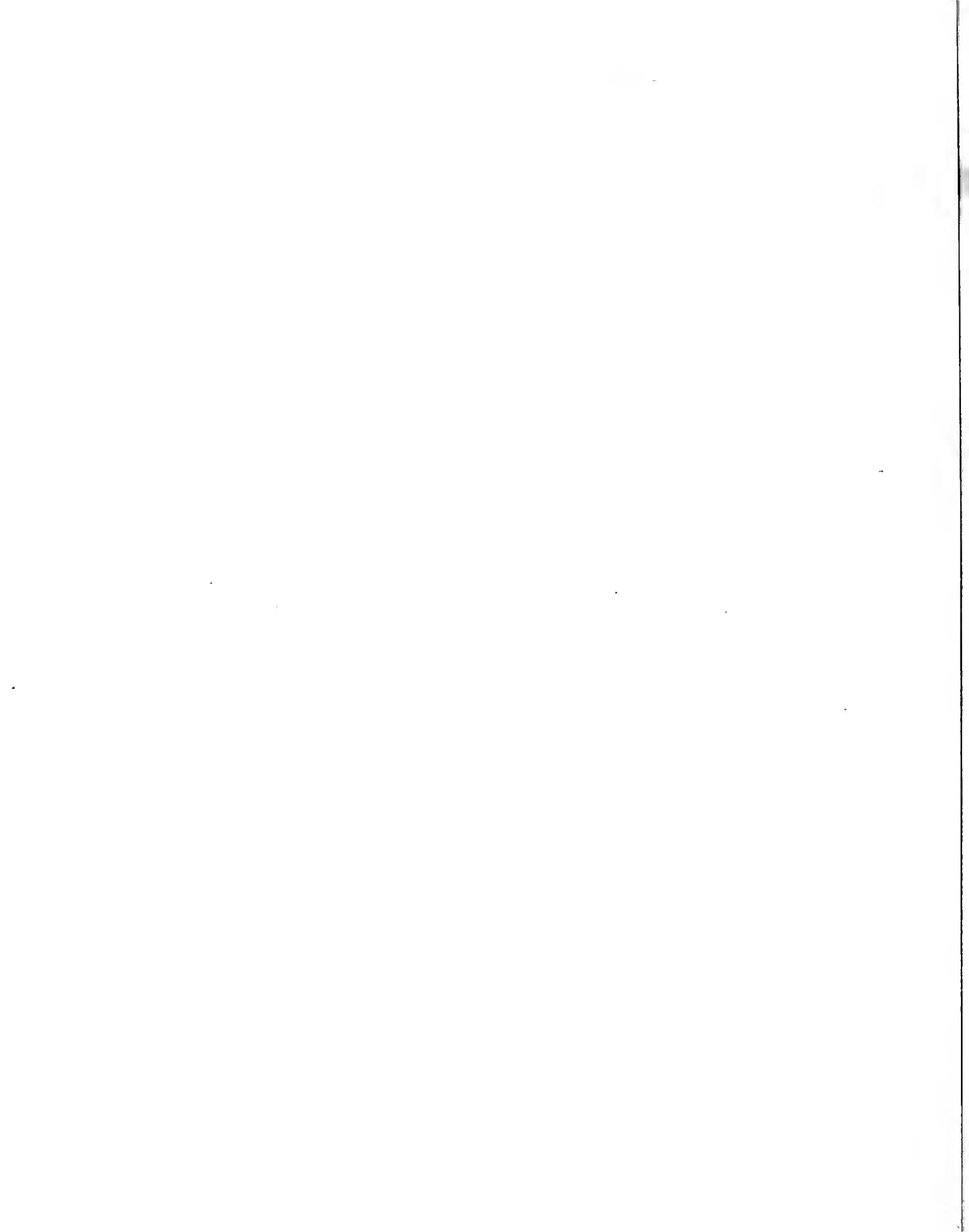
- a new elementary school for 610 pupils on Humboldt Avenue between Harrishof and Waumbbeck Streets. This new school will replace the obsolete Boardman School and relieve overcrowding at the Ellis School and Garrison School.
- a new elementary school for 410 pupils between Fountain and Regent Streets. This new school will replace the obsolete Howe School.
- a new elementary school for 820 pupils in the vicinity of Harold and Homestead Streets, to relieve overcrowding at the Garrison School and to replace the Williams School.
- Lewis Junior High School will be converted into an elementary school. To rehouse pupils displaced from Lewis School, Roosevelt School will be converted into a junior high school and enlarged with a new addition. A new junior high school could also be built east of Blue Hill Avenue as part of a subsequent renewal program.

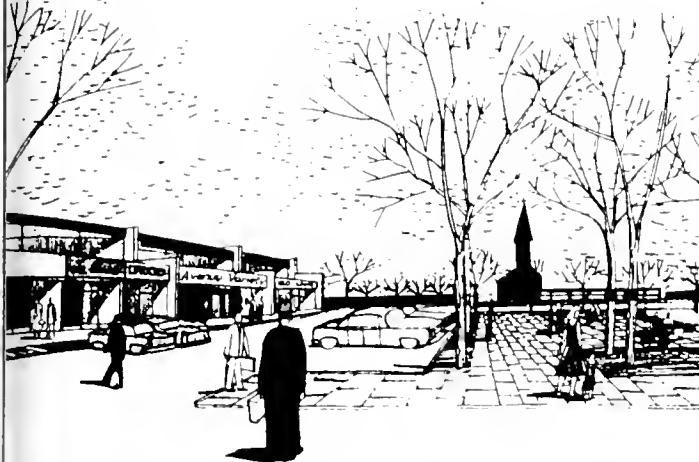
### NEW RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

Public recreational facilities to serve children and adults in Washington Park are woefully lacking. Almost 4,000 elementary school age children share only a handful of public swings and seesaws, while three public basketball hoops "make do" for an equally large number of adolescents. To provide the play areas to keep these youngsters off the streets, each of the three new elementary schools will have ample playgrounds. A playground will also be added to the Ellis School, while the playground in Harris Park will be improved.

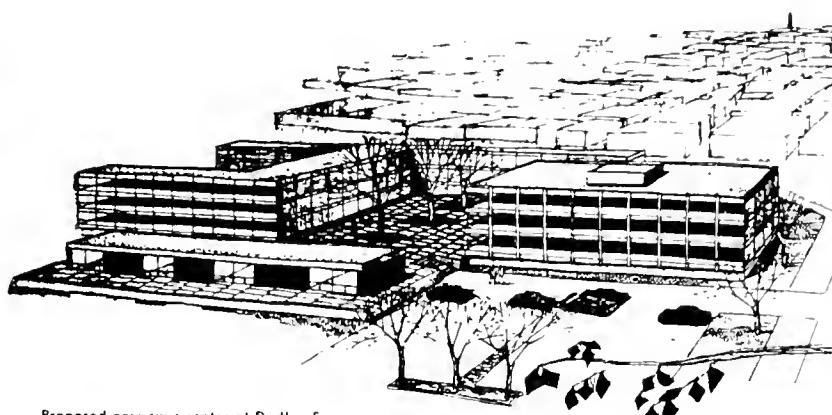
Here are other improvements planned for the Washington Park Neighborhood:

- a new recreation center between Washington Park and Washington Street for the Washington Park and Highland Park areas. This will include a playfield, a playground, and a community recreational center building. This playground will also serve Lewis Junior High School after its proposed conversion to an elementary school.
- a new YMCA on Warren Street between Munroe Street and the new crosstown boulevard. This major YMCA will contain a gymnasium and rooms for club meetings, games and special activities.
- a new Roxbury Boys' Club located near the new civic center at Dudley Square.





Proposed new neighborhood shopping center on Humboldt Avenue



Proposed new civic center at Dudley Square

#### NEW CIVIC CENTER AT DUDLEY SQUARE

The local shopping and transportation center Roxbury has always been Dudley Square. Today this badly congested area has many blighted and rundown buildings. One blighted section, within the boundaries of the proposed area, will be cleared to open up a one-acre site for a new civic center combining such community functions as a new Roxbury Court House and municipal offices, a new police station, one of the two new branch libraries to be built in this neighborhood, and the new Roxbury Boys' Club. Buildings will be grouped around a landscaped plaza and will provide ample off-street parking.

#### NEW COMMERCIAL AREAS

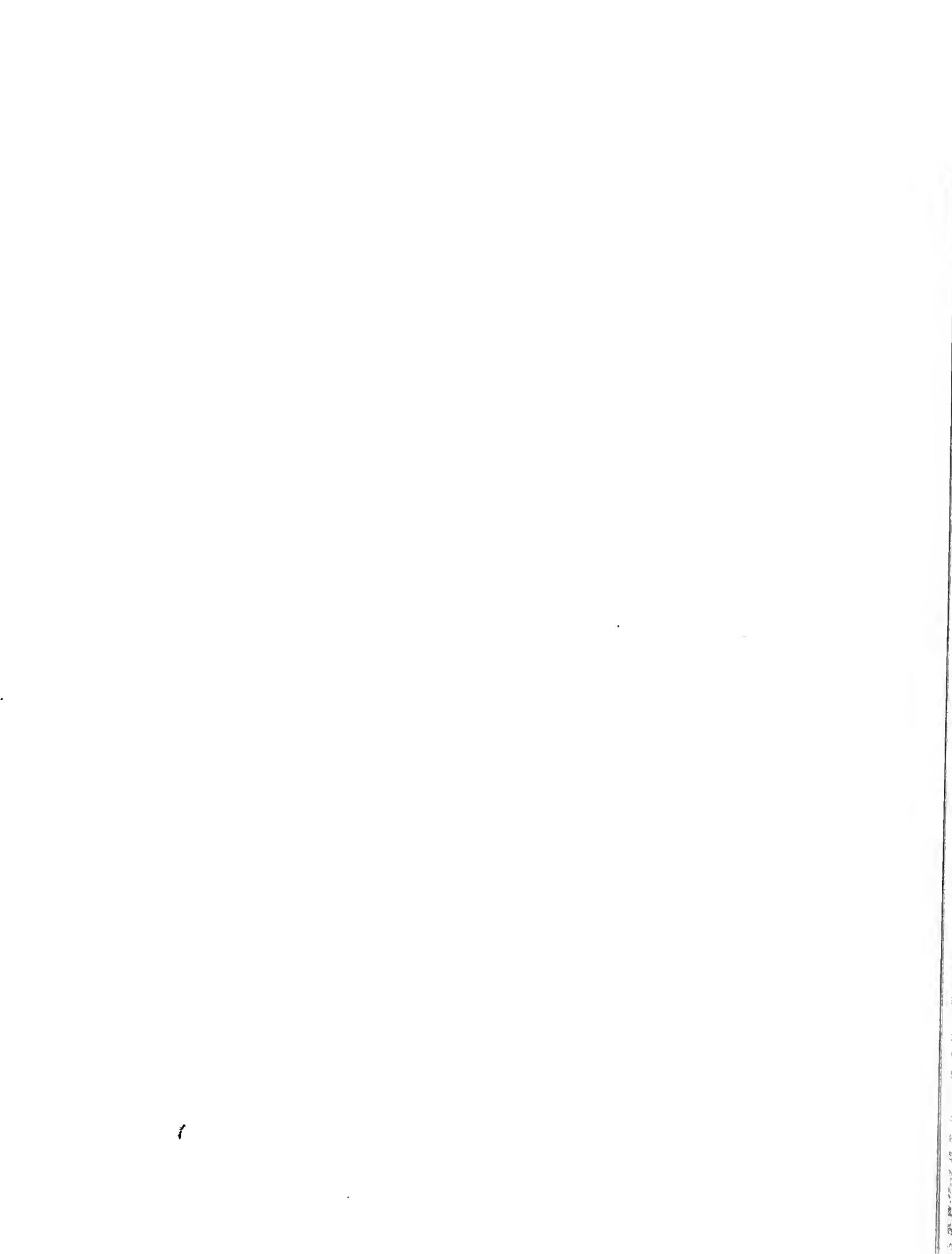
Many businesses in the Washington Park Neighborhood today are housed in rundown, dingy, or obsolete facilities. To provide attractive new space for business, and to make shopping more convenient for residents, here is what the plan proposes:

- a new eight acre community shopping center at the intersection of the new crosstown boulevard and Warren Street to contain a food market, a variety of small stores, and possibly a small department store.
- a one acre neighborhood shopping center and professional office building on Humboldt Avenue between Townsend and Harrishof Streets.
- a new neighborhood shopping center on Walnut Avenue at Circuit Street.
- a new neighborhood shopping center at the intersection of Washington Street and the new crosstown boulevard.
- off-street parking facilities for the shopping centers at Humboldt Avenue and Ruthven Street, and at Grove Hall.
- a three acre commercial site near Dudley Square to provide modern plant facilities for important local employers now located here.

#### TRAFFIC IMPROVEMENTS

Congested streets and lack of off-street parking are typical of this area. East-west circulation across the neighborhood is difficult. These conditions can be improved through a program which calls for new medians, street widening, and bus pull-offs on the most congested thoroughfares as well as new signals, better lighting, more off-street parking, and a major new crosstown boulevard.

- Humboldt and Walnut Avenues from Warren Street to Franklin Park will undergo a major facelifting. New traffic controls will make these streets much safer. They will also be beautified with landscaping and tree plantings.
- Warren Street from Deckard Street to Dudley Street will be widened and landscaped. Planting strips will act as noise buffers and improve neighborhood appearance, making this section of Warren an asset to the immediate neighborhood, rather than just a "through" street to downtown.
- a new thoroughfare with planted median will connect Warren to Washington Streets partly along the present alignment of Bower Street.



Many pleasant residential streets and homes in good condition convenient to downtown Boston

Excellent public transportation by bus and rapid transit

Washington Park, Horatio Harris Park, and Franklin Park to the south

28 churches, 4 synagogues, and other dedicated community-serving organizations including St. Mark's Social Center and Freedom House Civic Center

Boston Technical High School and the new Egleston Square branch library

The Ada Hinton Apartments for Women, the Jewish Memorial Hospital, and other local institutions that have shown their faith in this neighborhood by recent building programs

More than 6,000 families determined to save their neighborhood

Neglected streets and houses that blight their surroundings and lower property values

vacant and vandalized houses spotted throughout this neighborhood contributing to high fire insurance rates

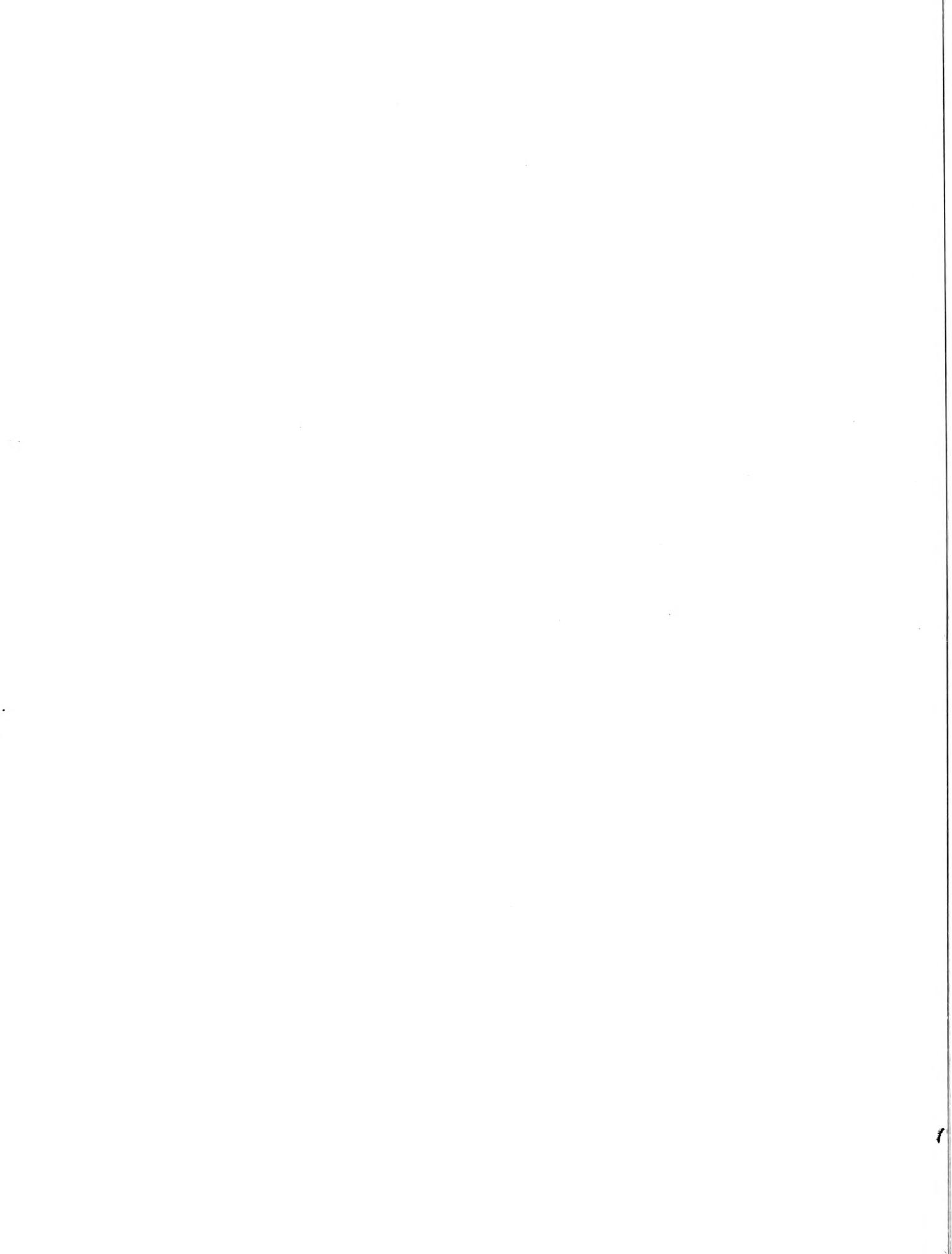
One out of four houses in bad repair

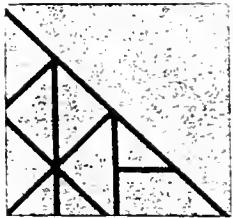
Obsolete public elementary schools

Many congested streets

Totally inadequate recreational areas contributing to a high and growing delinquency rate







JOHN F. COLLINS, Mayor

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Meeting of Citizens' Urban Renewal Action Committee (CURAC).

"The whole heart and soul of the renewal process in Boston today is planning with people. It marks a shift away from the clearance project to the renewal-rehabilitation project aimed at preserving an entire neighborhood.

"The process is simple. It begins with an act of faith. The BRA staff and neighborhood groups make contact with one another. They get acquainted. They work together and develop confidence and respect. This joint effort — this confidence and respect — is the basis of success."\*

\*Page 7, Boston's Workable Program for Community Improvement, 1962

This brochure describes a proposed urban renewal plan developed by the people of Washington Park in cooperation with BRA staff. Before the plan can be carried out it must be approved after public hearing by the BRA, the Boston City Council, the Massachusetts Division of Urban and Industrial Renewal, and the U.S. Housing and Home Finance Agency.

For further information about Urban Renewal in Washington Park call the Urban Renewal Information Center, Freedom House,

14 Crawford Street, HI 5-4720

or

the Boston Redevelopment Authority

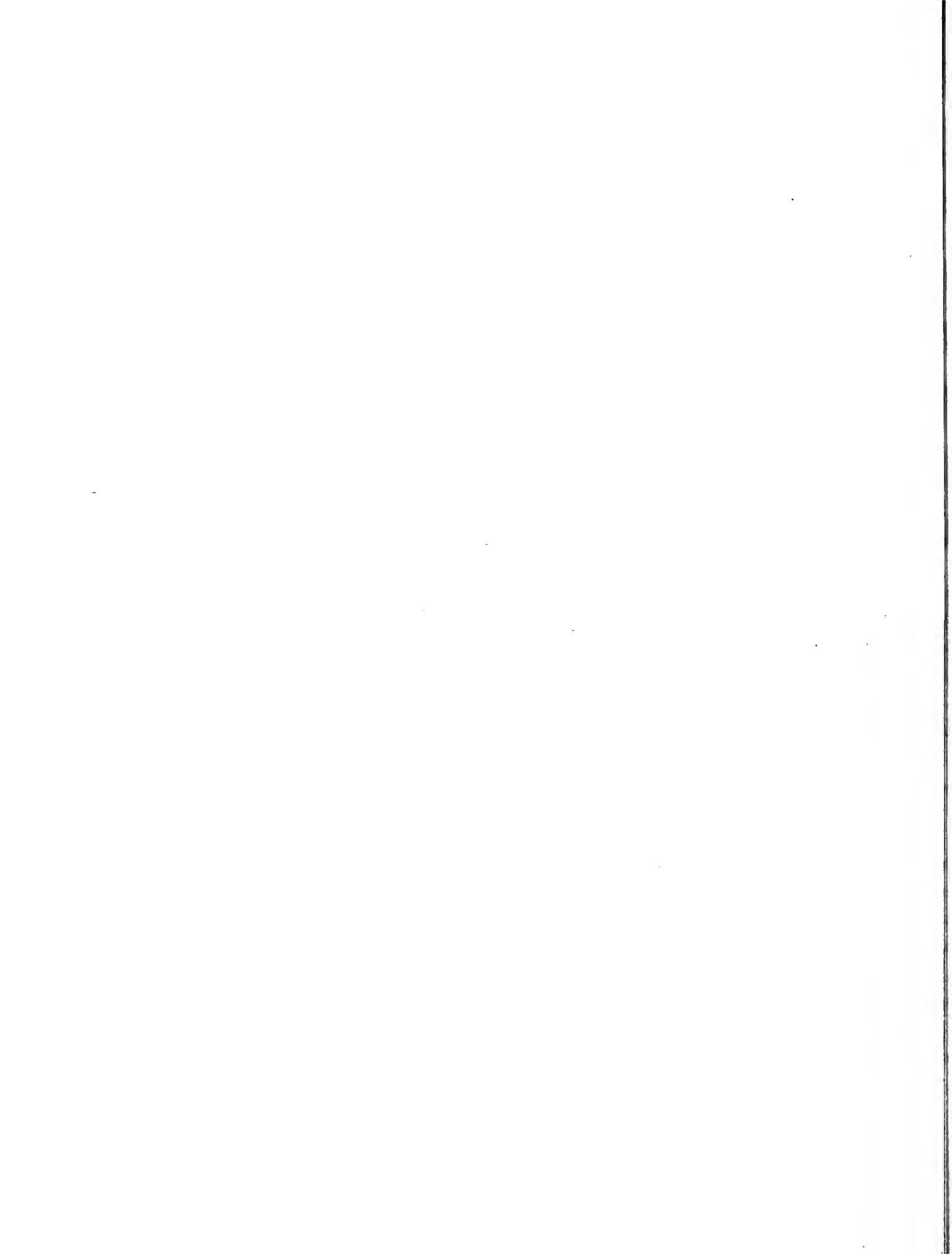
73 Tremont Street, RI 2-0500

City Hall Annex, CA 7-4270

Project Office

St. Richard's R. C. Church, HI 2-8712

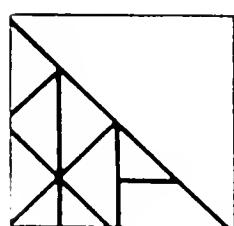
All photographs in this brochure are by Steven Trefonides except for page 5 (typical dwelling before rehabilitation) which is by Alessandro Macone, Inc.

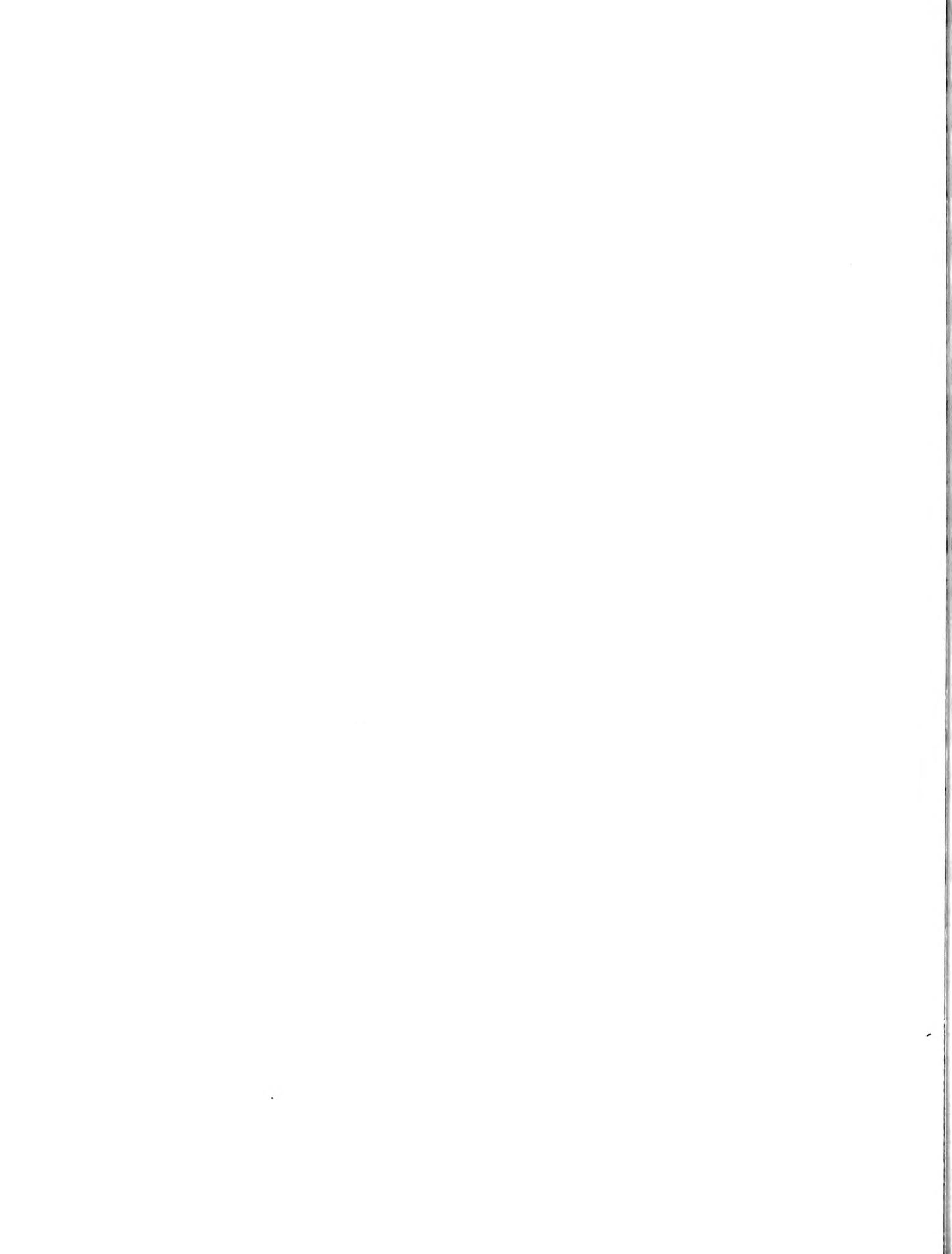


An Act of Faith:  
The Building of The Washington Park  
Urban Renewal Area 1960-1967.

Appendix

A Conversation with Edward J. Logue.





A Conversation with Edward J. Logue.

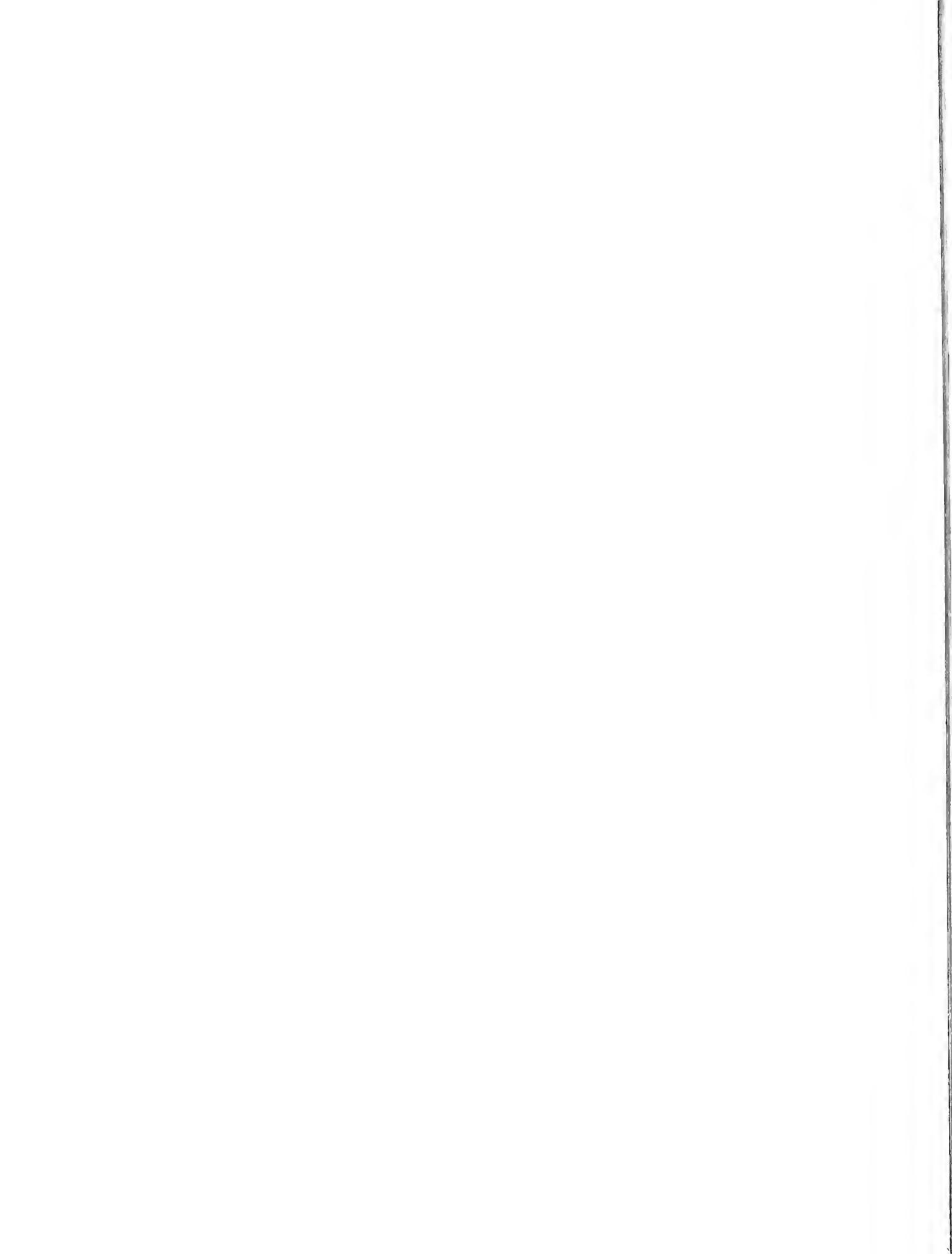
The sign on the carpeted landing to the office at 10 Winthrop Square simply states "Logue Boston". It is an appropriate name for the office of the man who was practically synonymous with Boston a generation ago. It is not inaccurate to say that what Christopher Wren was to 17th century London, Edward Logue was to mid-century Boston: if you seek their monument, look about you. Both men moved in the high echelons of government to achieve what they did; Wren was an architect and Logue essentially a builder, but both knew the language of power.

America's architects and planners of the twentieth century are far less familiar than those of the previous century, although more was created by the architects and planners in 20th century America. So Edward Logue will fade like Daniel Burnham and even Robert Moses. Americans today celebrate and erect monuments to figures in sports and entertainment. The cult of the individual reigns.

Logue seems to understand this well - if it even occurs to him at all. Perhaps he is most fortunate to know himself well enough that he doesn't need to be reminded of what he has achieved. He is a man today in his eighth decade, soft spoken, portly, ruddy faced and with a shock of white hair. He has not only the look but the air of Santa Claus in a business suit. A generation ago, he was Santa Claus to the City of Boston for the million upon millions of dollars which he generated and leveraged for Boston under Mayor John Collins.

As he makes himself comfortable in a chair, he looks half at the guest and half out the window and begins to quietly talk about his work in Roxbury, "I had a lot of fun in Washington Park."

The conversation - for that is exactly what it became, not an interview, not a lecture, but almost a reminiscence - took on the form of recalling a time of excitement that has not diminished. The power struggles with the South Boston - dominated City Council, or arrogant developers or his own board on the BRA have receded in his mind, as have many specific details. What has remained is the feeling of accomplishment and enthusiasm around the creation of Washington Park Urban Renewal.



"For me it was a wonderful experience. Looking back, the resources we were able to obtain for that are beyond today's imagining".

In his book The Rehabilitation Planning Game, Langley Keyes wrote that Washington Park was a fait accompli by 1960: the first general proposal had been written and the survey and planning grant had been approved by the Federal Government. Logue, wrote Keyes, would have preferred not to have started at Washington Park. This was strongly denied by Logue. He recalled driving around the community in the winter 1959-1960 with Lloyd Sinclair of the Boston Redevelopment Authority and being impressed with the decay in the housing stock. "We had an emergency", said Logue.

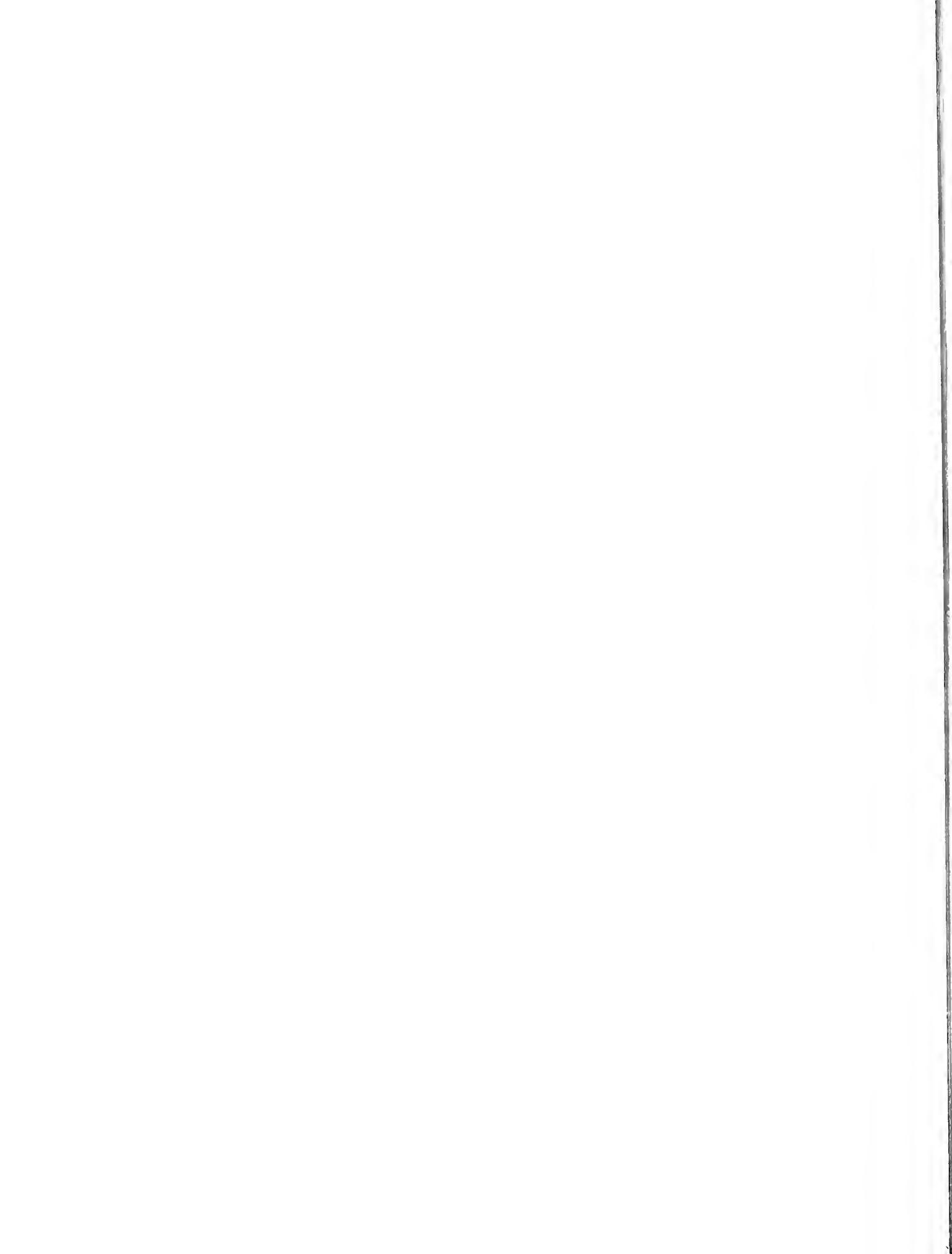
Today advocacy planning is the only thing to do, he said, but thirty years ago it was practically unknown. Except in Washington Park where he met the Snowdens and was swept up by their enthusiasm and of their neighbors.

It was Mayor-elect John Collins who called on Logue through a mutual friend and Logue came up from New Haven by train in December 1959. Collins was, in Logue's memory three decades later, totally ignorant of urban renewal, its impact, its potentialities and its costs. Collins did know that in Boston it was a mess and he wanted Logue to set it straight. Logue came back a few days later and agreed to attempt the task, but wondered, "There's nothing here to work with. What makes you think an outsider can do the job?"

Collins reply was "only an outsider can do the job. Here they keep track of you beginning when you're in short pants".

The draft of what became known as The \$90 Development Program for Boston - a copy of which Logue proudly held up - was first presented to Collins in the den of his Myrtle Street, Jamaica Plain home in May or June, 1960.

Collins was struck by its organizational simplicity and he approved the concept. He also approved Logue's suggestion that legislation be prepared which would combine planning with development under one head in one body. Logue remembers saying "Everybody on Beacon Hill was getting ready to fly out to Los Angeles and nominate Jack Kennedy for President, so I wanted to have



a package ready for them to vote on when they came back". Part of the success of Logue was getting to the right people to help and he took Lou Weinstein, one of the fathers of public housing in Boston to John McCormack's office to begin the way to create the BRA that is known today.

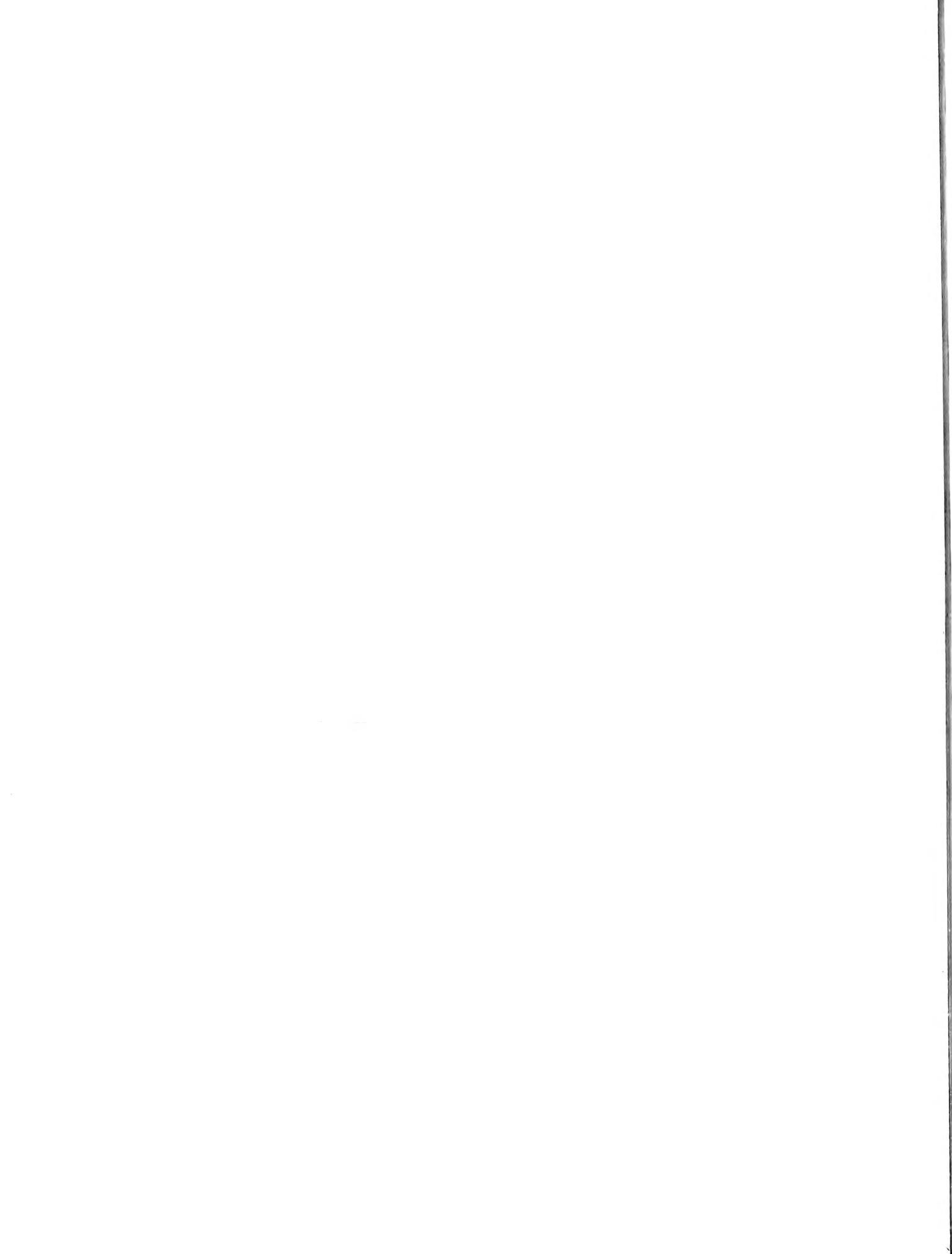
The legislation passed and Logue recalled standing on the traffic island at Court Street and Tremont Street opposite the old Pemberton Square in January, 1961 and thinking that he "had the legal authority, the political support and the money, and nobody knows it".

The City Council was getting to know it. Dominated by South Boston Councilmen elected at large in city-wide contests, they were no friend of John Collins who thrashed their man John E. Powers in the 1959 mayoral campaign. Logue needed their approval. But, he knew Washington better so he went to New York in the last few months of the Eisenhower administration and got their commitment to Urban Renewal for Boston. The City Council agreed with Logue's plans because Logue had Federal connection and the financial commitment. Logue also had the people in the Washington Park Community.

At the public hearings on renewal for Washington Park before large crowds at Roxbury's High School, the Councillors grew weary listening to repetitious testimony in favor. Finally, at one hearing, the City Councillor who chaired the presentation before 1,000 people, simply asked if there was anyone who opposed it, would they please stand. About six people did including who Logue recalled as a representative from St James Episcopal church (which never relocated in Washington Park).

It became clear to Logue and the staff of trained professionals, which he was assembling in 1961, that the original 186 acre renewal area was "totally unworkable". "There was no easy way to do relocation, no support for the low income residents which continued to expand into deteriorated housing".

The project area needed more sensible boundaries. The renewal plan and its various components were arrived at after the boundaries were settled. Logue had some problems with his Central Design staff under David Crane, particularly in their



approach to the design of the new areas. He went out to the community at various meetings to give the designers more shape and substance to work with.

"We asked 'what does the neighborhood need?' Back came 'police station, courthouse, housing, schools and parks'. We then asked "what are you willing to pay for it in demolition and relocation?'

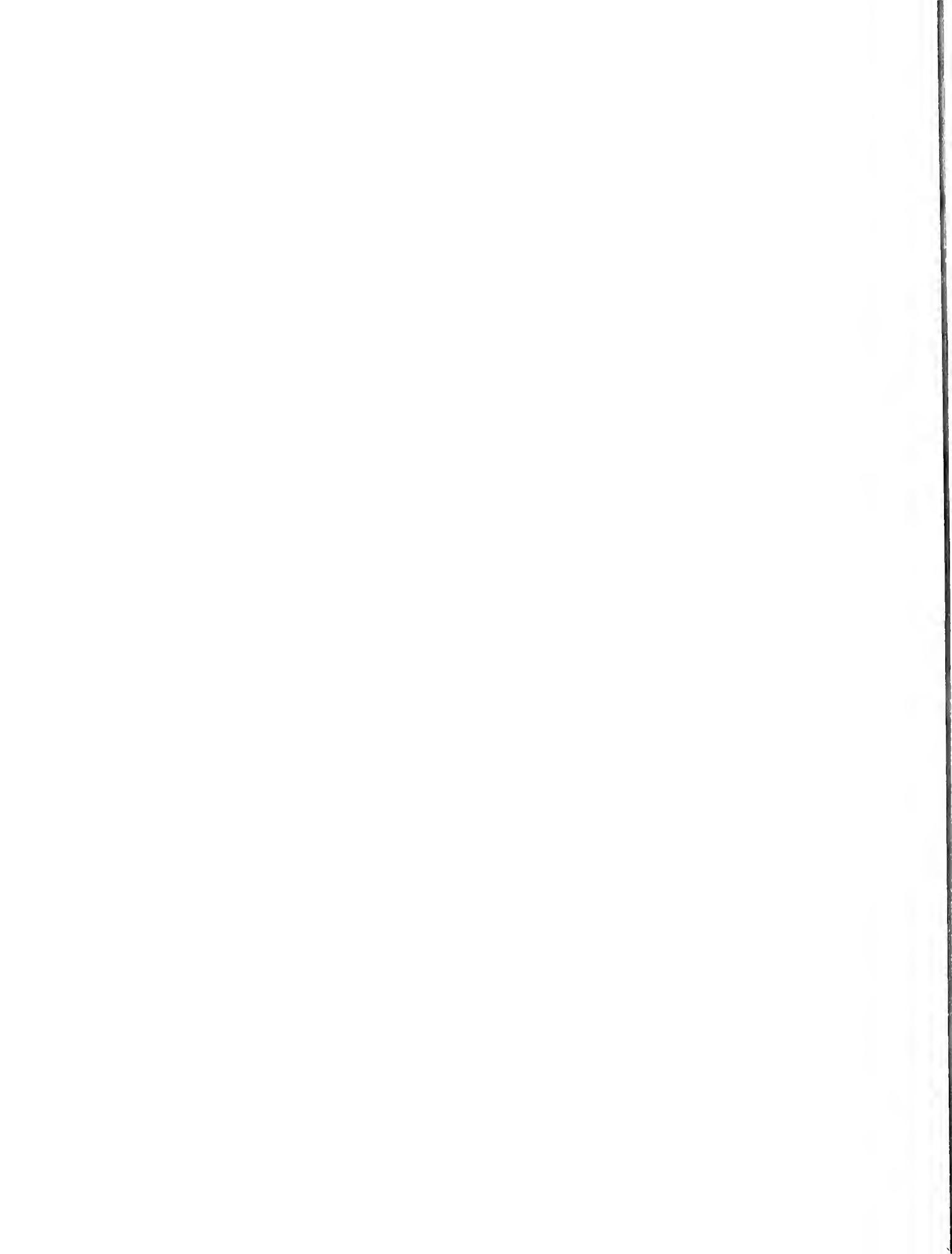
"The area was increasingly becoming a ghetto. There was a need for stability. Rehabilitation of existing housing was a key component to that, so we kept it up until we got closer together with what the community wanted and what we wanted".

When asked about his memory of the feelings of John Collins towards renewal of his old neighborhood, Logue smiled and said "I think as we got along that he began to see it not as his neighborhood any more, but mine".

## II

Edward Logue's neighborhood began to take shape with the Early Acquisition Grant for the Notre Dame Academy site. This was the first Early Acquisition grant in the country.

It was Logue's commitment to involve local people in the development and construction of the components fo teh renewal plan. This was not without its struggles, which Logue did not dwell on. Indeed, what was remarkable about the conversation was the absence of any bitterness or anger over what must certainly have been an era full of tension and struggle. There was tons of "free money" available and that - in Boston at least - tends to bring out the worst in people. But in Logue's mind, these have receded to their proper perspective, because whatever these were, the renewal plan got built. Logue did recall the original developer of Academy Homes, whom he named with an unkind expletive. Logue was contending with the developer on two renewal sites - Academy Homes and Tremont-on-the-Common, which suggested the tensions involved in developing an entire city. It also suggested how much Logue had to balance pressures on Washington Park with other renewal projects. Logue spoke of a



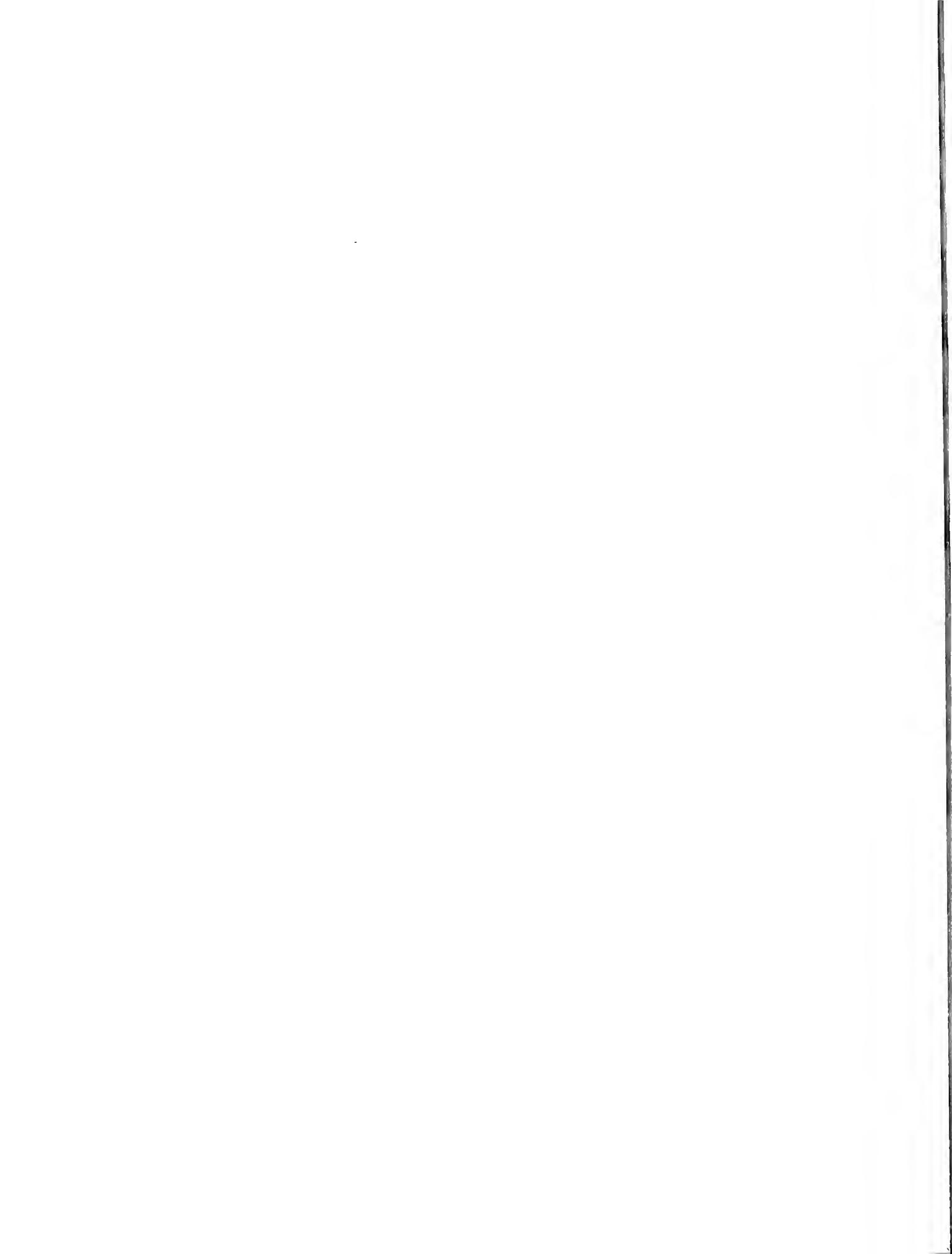
visit from a union representative who was quite persuasive in his attitudes towards full participation by his union by suggesting a union boycott. Logue replied that he might invite minority construction workers to visit the union and inquire into the minority membership of that union. With a smile, Logue summed up that episode as a way to exploit the situation when in actuality there was more than enough work for all construction teams.

Logue wrote in 1967 that Academy Homes was something he was proud of. In 1990 that opinion has changed. Today he is disappointed "It shouldn't have been built. We tried to put too much on that site". He doesn't remember why it was left so incomplete, although he feels (as will be described in more detail) that the new BRA under Mayor Kevin White, was unfamiliar with the renewal plans and that may be part of the reason.

If Academy Homes is a disappointment to Logue, he is very pleased with the rehabilitation work which "to an astonishing degree has held up". This cannot be denied as anyone walking through the community today can see for himself: the housing stock is sound and well maintained with very few exceptions.

Logue named Robert McGilvary as the person responsible for the success of rehabilitation of housing in Washington Park. As the Rehab Officer under Logue, McGilvary helped the Snowdens set up the Pilot House on Humboldt Avenue in 1965. And then one by one, beginning with the Boston Five Cents Savings Bank, he showed the financial community how rehabilitation investment could work.

Logue is most fond of the housing at Marksdale I on Townsend Street, developed by St. Marks Church. He recalled that the traffic department opposed the street pattern of Crestwood Park, but the type of cluster housing planned for that site doubled the amount of available housing. At Charlame, Logue admitted that he paid too little attention to the housing built between Humboldt Avenue and Washington Park Mall. He regretted



that it did not have the same air and quality as its sister project tucked around Walnut Avenue and Humboldt Avenue.

Marksdale II between Hazelwood Street and Humboldt Avenue was the site reserved for low income housing which was strongly opposed by the community, especially the Snowdens. Logue recalled that he spent hours in the basement of the Snowdens house on Supple Road going over plans for the renewal area and low income housing was simply not on the agenda, period. He credits Jack Meyer (Ashley, Meyer and Associates) as the architect of Warren Gardens - a development which Logue thinks is the high-point of the entire area. He defended the wall along Warren Street as the only way to construct the housing without blasting through enormous amounts of ledge.

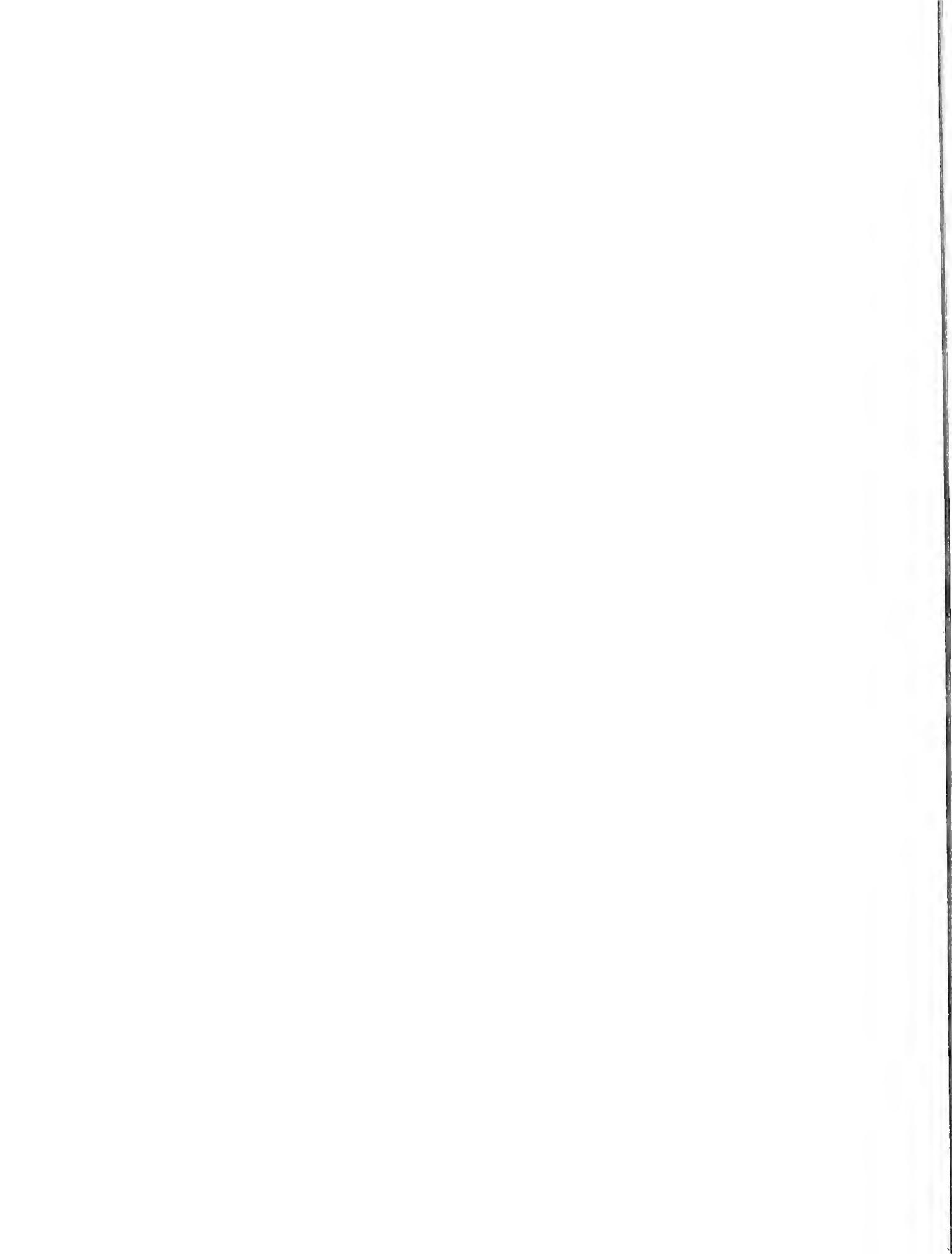
In response to a statement that the architectural style has not met the test of time, Logue defended his office for considering aesthetics very much in the planning process.

He credits Charles G. Hilgenhurt, who headed up the BRA's Design Review team, for keeping the standards of the day to the highest.

Logue pointed with dismay at the Civic Center, especially the library.

"I got Kallman to do the commission. I said I wanted to see large glass windows so that from the street you could look in and see people reading. What we got was this big wall of glass bricks and I guess that's the way people thought about Roxbury in the late '60's". It was a revealing statement and although not much else was said about the Civic Center, it clearly was not built the way it was envisioned.

For the areas such as the proposed 12th Baptist Church housing on Waumbeck and Crawford Street, the business block on Washington and Elmore Street, the lot across from the Trotter School, Logue could not recall the reasons they were not completed. Yet, he was less concerned about the plan not being followed exactly as he was about the plan not being followed at all by his predecessors in the BRA. He criticized Judge Garrity strongly for being the responsible party in the failure to build Harold Street and Alpine Street Schools. ("They built all the schools



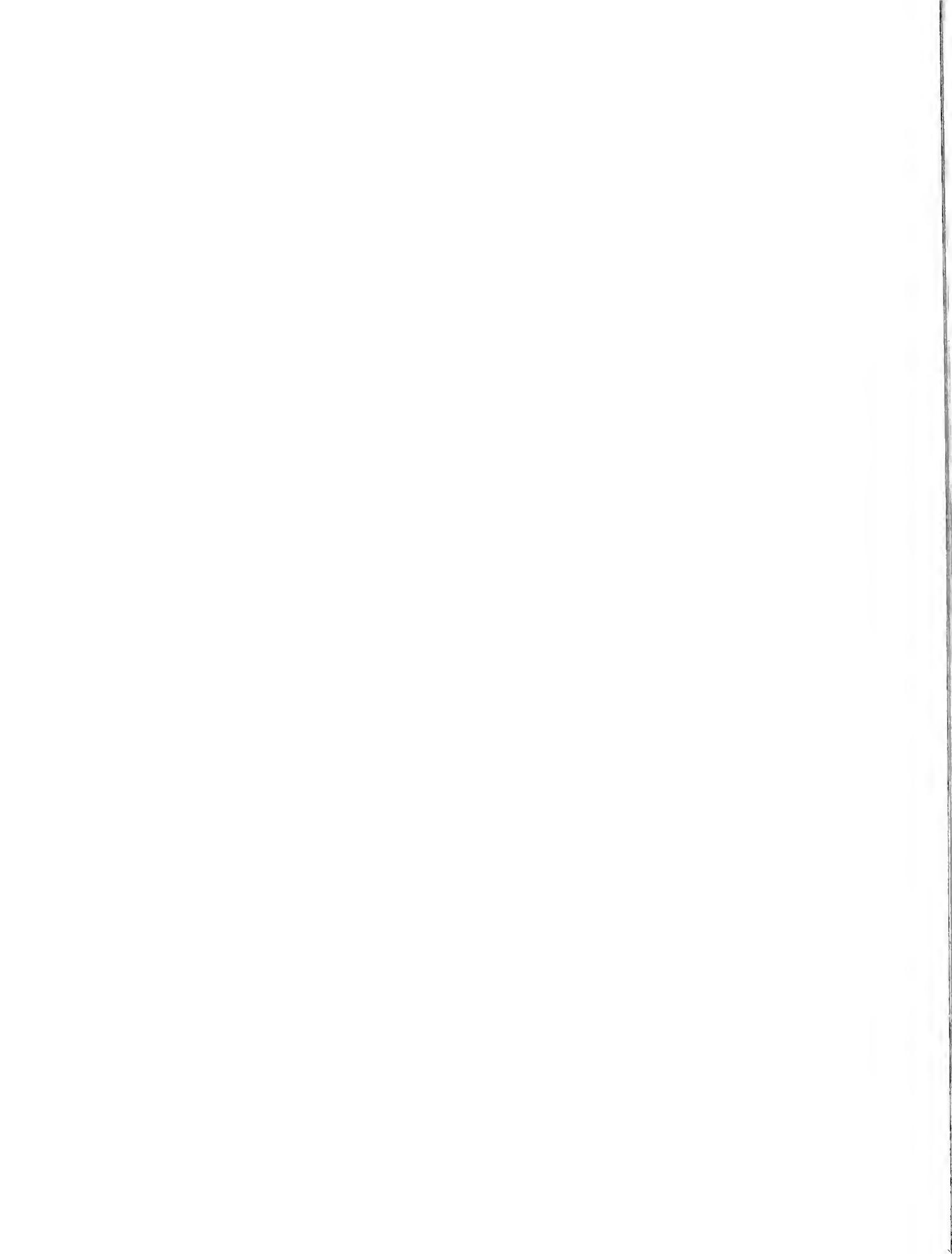
in Charlestown!") But he reserved his strongest comments for the BRA of Kevin White.

"They simply had other things on their minds".

For Washington Park to have achieved its full potential, the BRA should have assigned a project manager and a staff to continue the plan and work out the problems that arose. In Logue's view, the failure of Mayor Kevin White to take Washington Park seriously was the reason for the Washington Park plan to dwindle down. It was not money. The money dried up in 1973. There was a full five years between Kevin White's inauguration as the successor to John Collins and the day in January 1973 when President Nixon impounded the urban renewal funds. In those years White tried first for Governor and then Vice President. In Logue's view, the City of Boston was not uppermost in White's mind in those years.

As the conversation began to end, Logue settled back and again ended his reminiscence almost the way he had begun it. "It was an easy time". And then, "but there's no place there that I could walk around in like I did 30 years ago". It was a statement that many residents of Washington Park would agree with today. They feel the fear, too. Between those two statements lies the one component missing from the Washington Park Urban Renewal Plan - the will to govern it as an integral part of the City of Boston. For two decades there has been a failure of courage to act, to lead, to include and to be innovative in the challenges of the Washington Park community of Roxbury. For two decades the forces of neglect have spawned the specter of fear which stalks and overshadows the City of Boston and has its grip on Roxbury.

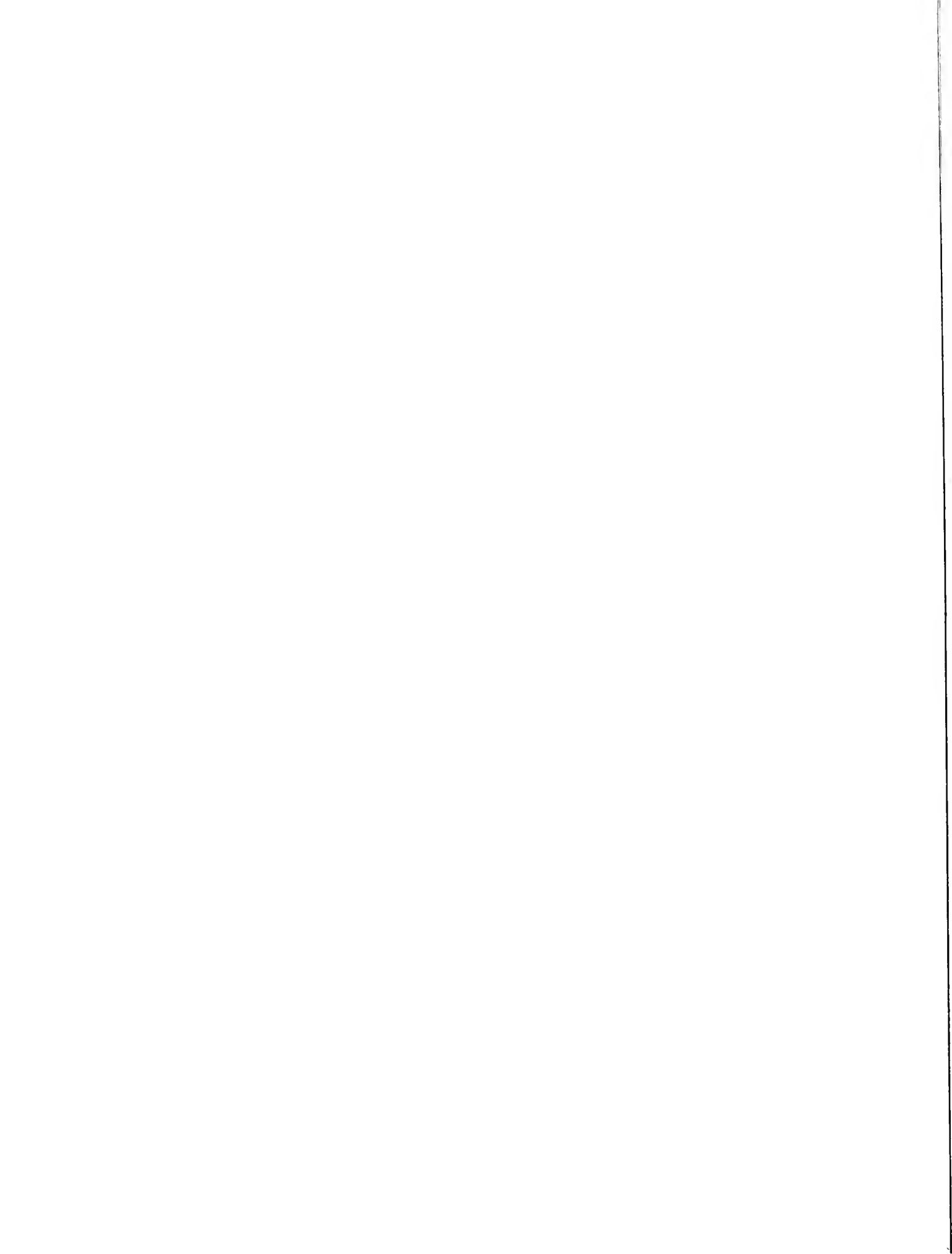
Fear grows in the absence of courage and it thrives on being manipulated. In the upcoming year the incumbant Mayor will seek reelection. It is said there is no real opposition due to the imcumbant's popularity. But, there is an opponent-the same one for 20 years - Fear. He always wins in the absence of courage and in the political manipulation of groups and peoples.



Fear will be defeated when a magistrate of courage acts on words of the first Mayor of Boston - John Winthrop - to "make others conditions your own, No man is made more honorable than another".\*

Richard Heath  
December 7, 1990

\*John WInthrop: A Model of Christian Charity, September, 1630.





BOSTON  
PUBLIC  
LIBRARY

